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ORAL HISTORY

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VIOLET ORR

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ORAL HISTORY
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VIOLET MAY ORR

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August 4, 1977

Interview History

Oral History of VIOLET ORR

b. Violet Orr, on May 28, 1904, in San Francisco, California.

Now living in a mobile home on own acreage in Cottage Grove,Oregon.

Dates of Interview:

May 18, 1976
June 11, 1976
June 12, 1976
December 30, 1976
(approximately 12 hours)

General Topic

Life history and activities, particularly during the early thirties and the forties, in relation to her membership and Activities in the Communist Party, her employment as a laundry worker, her union activities; her church and peace work; and the difficulties she and her husband encountered because of their membership in the party.

Interviewer: Lucy Kendall

Conduct of Interview

Mr. and Mrs. Orr live in Cottage Grove, Oregon, and come to the Bay Area several times a year. During these visits the interview was conducted - twice in the home of the interviewer, and once in the home of Mr. Orr's sister near Sacramento, California. Because of the time limites the interviews were marathon, taking up whole afternoons for each session.

Mrs. Orr is a healthy, active, organized woman of seventy three. She and her husband celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1976. They have an unusually close relationship. She insisted he sit in on all sessions so they could consult. He occasionally made remarks, kept notes, and at the end of the sessions made additionalcomments which are included in the transcription. Despite the travails of having lost jobs and being uprooted from communities because of their political activities, both have an optimistic outlook and are still active in the community, church and peace work they have done all their lives.

She and the interviewer consulted by mail prior to the interview and felt it was better for her to have a general outline of the interview beforehand. This resulted in Mrs. Orr spending a good deal of preparatory time, and is noticeable in the first session which is almost straight narrative.

In between the interview sessions the interviewer took a course

(more)

from ROHO's Mimi Stein at Canada College. As a result of this she realized the interview did not have sufficient depth or proper organization. The final session, therefore, was intended to fill in the gaps which were obvious in the first three sessions.

Editing

To date the only editing has been done by the interviewee, and this just to the extent of correcting errors in the transcription. It has not been retyped.

Narrative Account of the Interview

Mrs. Orr opened the interview with a description of her childhood, her schooling, her family, and her activities in church work.

She discussed her attendance at Stanford, her meeting her future husband, their marriage after graduation.

We then developed her life from the time she and her husband went to New York to further their education, attended a Peace Conference in Amsterdam, and their return to the United States.

From that point they went to Russia to teach English. Their experiences there (this was after the revolution) are delineated.

Then she speaks of their return to the United States; their participation in the Friends of the Soviet Union organization; their conclusion to join theCommunist Party.

After this, there is a chronological recitation of their lives, their activities; their opinions on politics; their occasional full time work in the cause to which they devoted their lives.

Mr. and Mrs. Orr co-authored a book, 1993, The World of Tomorrow, published in 1968 by the Pacific Progress Publishers, P.O. Box 1695, Altaenda, California 91001.

A quote from the jacket says:

"This controversial book presents an optimistic glimpse into the future as a narrative fantasy about a victim of sleeping sickness awakened after twenty-five years into a new society -- to which he objects. But studies its challenging solutions to smog, urban blight, racism, juvenile delinquency, long working hours; high taxes, and the drudgery of housework; offering as well full employment -- even to senior citizens."

A copy is available through the CHS Library.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON VIOLET ORR January, 1977

For the California Historical Society
Women in California Collection Oral History Interview

Name: VIOLET MAY BALCOMB ORR
Place of Birth: San Francisco, California
Date of Birth: May 28, 1904

Name of Husband: Paul Orr (Paul Wright Orr)
Date of Marriage: June 19, 1926
Plade of Marriage: Stanford Chapel, Stanford University
Palo Alto, Calif.

Parents:

Mother (maiden name) Rose Gibbs
Born: Syracuse, New York
Date of Birth 2/12/1879
Date of Death 11/27/1949

Father: Jean Bart Balcomb
Born: Tracy Creek, New York
Date of Birth 6/26/1868
Date of Death 8/17/1927

Date of Marriage: June 20, 1903
Plade of Marriage: San Francisco, California

Grandparents

Mother's Side: Name of father: Wesley Davidson Gibbs
Date of Birth: 7/13/1842 Date of Death 1/8/1908
Name of mother (maiden) Nettie Learn Struble
Date of Birth: 2/4/1842 Date of Death 1/1/1923

Father's Side: Name of Father: Francis Balcomb
Date of Birth: 9/25/1837 Date of Death 1/28/1888
Name of mother (maiden) Lydia E. Goodno
Date of Birth: 7/11/1838 Date of Death 12/12/1930

Brothers and/or Sisters

Brother	Date of Birth: 2/10/1908
Sister	Date of birth: 5/28/1917
Brother	Date of Birth: 11/6/1910
Brother	Date of Birth: 1/30/1914
Brother	Date of Birth: 2/8/1923

Paul and Violet Orr

Moscow, 1930.

Filed under Orr in
Portrait collection.

Paul and Violet Orr, taken in Modesto, California 1933 or 1934
filed under Orr in portrait collection.

VIOLET ORR'S FATHER
1919

JEAN BART BALCOMB

The Coming of Peace

The war clouds shift,
With hope, like a star, shining through;

The dark clouds rift,
With the sky of a brightening hue;

The peace clouds lift,
With the dawn of a day that is new;

For ever unfolds an infinite plan,
Inspiring the thought of war-worn man
To high endeavor and world-wide view.

J. B. B.

Original in file in MS department. Oral History.

Marking 50th anniversary

Orrs honored at reunions

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Orr, of 78700 Bryson Sears Rd., returned last week from a month long trip to Southern Oregon and California where they visited with friends and relatives who honored them with a series of reunions celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary..

The first celebration was in the parlor of the First Methodist Church in Palo Alto,Calif., where Mrs. Orr's brother, Gene Balcomb and his wife, Genevieve arranged a lunch with 24 Stanford friends who had graduated with them in 1925. The Orrs were married June 19, 1926 in the Stanford Memorial Chapel.

Mrs. Orr's sister Elrose Pearson and her husband, John, hosted a family reunion in their San Leandro, Calif., home. There were 59 people in attendance.

In San Francisco, Calif., a sister-in-law, Lucy Kendall, entertrained 15 friends, most of whom were veterans with the Orrs during a campaign in the depression days in the 1930's which won unemployment insurance and social security in the United States.

In Southern California the Orrs were nature counselors at a four-day mountain school on Mt. San Jacenta. They were counselors for 33 youngsters fourth-graders from one of the Los Angeles' schools. A friend of the Orrs was a teacher to the students last year.

Also near Los Angeles, Calif., 70 friends and members of the 'Nature Friends Hiking and Conservation Club' honored the Orrs with a social evening in their canyon clubhouse. A potluck dinner was served, music was provided, and slides of India and Nepal were shown.

In the Sacramento, Calif. area, Mr. Orr's sister, Evelyne and her husband, William, hosted a dinner for cousins in their Sierra foothill home.

The final touch to their trip was a picnic given by Ashland friends in Lithia Park where the Orrs were presented with tickets for a preview of one of the Shakespeare plays.

Engagement announced

Mr. and Mrs. John Kahoilua wish to announce the engagment of their daughter, Elena Clegg, to Gregory Boyle son of Mr. and Mrs. Vance Roach. Both families are of Cottage Grove.

Miss Clegg will be a senior at Cottage Grove High School this fall. Mr. Boyle is serving in the United States Marine Corps.

A wedding date has not been set.

Smiths attend son's graduation

Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Smith recently were in LaMirada, Calif., for the graduation of their son, Rick, from Biola College. Rick, and his wife, Sandy, will move to Portland soon so he can attend Western Conservative Baptist Seminary to study for the ministry. Rick graduated from Cottage Grove High School in 1968.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Orr

Children to honor couple

Children of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Owen will honor their parents on their 50th wedding anniversary with an open house at the Owen's home at Lorane on Sunday, July 4 between 2 and 5 p.m.

Children of the couple are Vivian Bailey, Frances Nelson and Roger Owen. Mr. Owen's sister, Viola Bernhardt will also assist.

Mr. and Mrs. Owen have lived in Lorane since 1942. They were married in Red Lodge, Mont. on July 3, 1926.

65th year to be noted

Mr. and Mrs. James (Jack) Jones of 1104 Madison St. will be honored on their 65th wedding anniversary with an open house at their home tomorrow (Friday) from 2 to 5 p.m.

The event will be hosted by their daughter, Mrs. Ernest Cochell of Brownsville. Friends of the couple are invited to attend.

The Jones were married in Texas and have lived in Cottage Grove area about 40 years.

Becky Myers, Rick Chase

8/76

Dear

We want to say "thank you" to you and all of our many friends and family members who gave us such a wonderful Golden Wedding Anniversary month on our trip to California from May 12 to June 14.

The reunions in Palo Alto (26), San Leandro (59), San Francisco (18), Los Gatos (10), Palm Springs (8), Nature School on Mt. San Jacinto (40), the Social at the Nature Friends Clubhouse in Sierra Madre (70), and Folsom (7) were really the most exciting and heartwarming events of our lives, and combined with the fellowship of individual visits, showed that the great expectations of our wedding -- fifty years ago -- were really being fulfilled.

Now, please let us know your wedding anniversary date, as well as which year you have reached, so we may also celebrate with you.

A few comments on our 3073 mile trip in our "Bluebird" van, which performed beautifully -- just one wire slipped off of a spark plug near Palm Springs.

We saw many beautiful flowers: purple vetch, golden bush lupine "on top" of the Siskiyous, great patches of white blossomed dogwood near Dunsmuir, the blue mountain lilac in many places, little clumps of both golden and orange poppies, and blushing wild roses gracing the roadsides. The High Desert was brightened by yellow and fragrant cassis shrubs. The Low Desert, where we lived for two years, seemed to have been less affected by the drought than other places, so we were welcomed by our old friends the desert gold sunflower and pink lavender sand verbena in all their splendor.

The California hills were tawny with touches of green only where the fog had crept in with welcome moisture. The hills were gray where hungry cattle had eaten all plants to the ground.

We were surprised that there seemed so few city, county, or state actions to save the precious water in the depleted reservoirs (like Shasta Lake with very high red banks above the water) but which could still supply enough water for another dry year -- and so little consciousness of the need to conserve water on the part of many people. As one of our nephews remrked "Just one brick in the waterback of the toilet could save a lot of water!"

Once again we want to tell you how much we enjoyed our visits with all 270 of you. Now, come to visit us! If it is soon you can help us harvest our hay crop!

Paul & Violet Off

letter to FRIENDS

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VIOLET ORR - 5/18/76 - first interview - page one

Q. OK. Violet, what is the date of your birth and your maiden name?

A. May 28th, 1904, and my maiden name is Violet Balcomb. Then later, in my early teens, I wanted a middle name. So my parents let me choose my own, and I took May.

Q. I would like to know where you were born, and the age of your mother and father when you were born.

A. I was born in San Francisco, California, and I think that the building which had several flats, was across from a park a few blocks west of Van Ness and south of Geary. I arrived before the doctor got there. But my father's mother, grandmother Balcomb, was with my mother who, I think, gave birth to all of her children very easily. I think that my mother was 25 and my father was just about ten years older than she was. I think it is possible that I have the wrong thing in mind, and that there was only seven years' difference because we corrolated them with my husband's folks' ages, and my father and his mother were about the same age.

Q. How did your parents meet?

A. My mother had a brother of whom she was very fond, Roy Gibbs, who was a doctor, and he went up to be a company doctor at a mine in Placer, California. My father was the engineer at the mine. In those days you could be a mining, an electrical, ~~technical~~, a civil engineer, and really work in all fields and have competence in them. Mother and her family were Baptists, but I presume there was only one little community church. Father was a Methodist and they went to church there. I know Roy admired father very much, and he and mother started going together. They finally got engaged and were married on June 30th, 1903.

Q. Were you Scotch? Tell me a little bit about their ethnic background.

A. Well I'll begin with my father who was born in New York, and I think that his background was mainly English. His family goes back to before the 1st Am. Revolution and we were somewhat related to Daniel Webster. I was eligible to join the Daughers of the American Revolution on the basis of genealogical material. Did you want to know a little bit about the background of his parents? What his father did?

Q. Why not. I think it's a great idea.

A. Well, his parents came from New York state but they went out to what was then the frontier in Kansas and had a farm there. But my father's father, my grandfather, Francis Balcomb, was a travelling carpenter. It is interesting that he built an octagonal house for his family with a hurricane celler, really not underneath, but on the side, as I understand it. He died rather early from ~~perhaps~~ probably the smoke and flames of a prarie grass fire. There were six children in the family, so I think it was in his fifties, something like that. This octagonal house, my brother who is next to me in our family, he and his wife saw it fifteen years ago. We found where he was buried.

My mother really was at home with the family, and she was an outstanding person. She had worked before she was married for a farmer and his wife. The stories differ. One was that she got $5.00 a month. The other was that she got $5.00 a year and a dress and a pair of shoes. But she was very industrious. By the time she got married she had made sheets, and pillows from the chicken and duck feathers which had been killed on the farm, and she really had made a complete set of things she would need for home making. She and my grandfather were looked to by the neighbors to help them in their illnesses. My grandfather kept certain simple basic remedies on hand. And she ran a post office which was called "Success" in their house, and they also had a well.

Q. Where was this?

A. This was in Kansas. I thought of Kansas as being very flat, but it was a pretty location where they were. They had a river with a bank, and it was a somewhat rolling country, so it was a pleasant location although it got very hot in summer and very bold in winter.

Q. Did you know your grandparents on both sides?

A. Let's just take it on my father's side first. I never even saw my grandfather Balcomb. But with my grandmother, I did know her because when I was about four years old we stayed with her for a while for a month or too. She lived in Forest Grove which is a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. I remember very well that for each of her grandchildren she always knit a pair of

mittens every Christmas. She also braided rugs, and I think I may still have one of those braided rung. Then we'll come to the matter that my folks homesteaded in Southeastern Oregon. She had a great sense of family loyalty and developed it in her children, so she went out and also filed on a claim to help them. And she lived on it the requisite number of months so do what is called "proving up" on 160 acres. Well I think it was the summer of 1915 when my folks went to the Worlds Fair she and I stayed and kept our farm. I can't remember right now which of the other children were with us. But I did have association with her there for a period of several years. She was a calm person. She was deeply religious, and she wrote letters until she was 92. I think she lived to be about 96. She was tall and spare. I was very fond of her, admired her then and admired her since. She visited us once after 1918 in Palo Alto. We had lived in her home shortly after I was born. I was born in San Francisco but within a year we moved to Palo Alto and we lived perhaps a year in her house and we were there at the time of the San Francisco earthquake and fire which only shook a few dishes off her shelf. But father and mother had a bedroom with my bed on casters, so with the earthquake it rolled one way and another across the room, and my mother said, I understand (I was only two years old) "get my baby, get my baby." She and father went up in the frist train from Palo Alto to take blankets and food to the people of San Francisco.

Q. Now you were going to talk more about your mother.

A. No, I am going to talk about my father. As I mentioned grandmother Balcomb really developed a great sense of loyalty in her family. And I don't know how they got the money for the first one to go to normal school, but I suppose it was Uncle Ernest because he was the oldest. Anyway he went to normal school. I am pretty sure that after you went two years you could teach. So he started to teach, and then the next one went to normal school. I really don't know about my father's older sister, Clara, whether she went to normal school or not. But anyway each one sent the next one through normal school. Father was both a teacher and an engineer. When I was born he was teaching at Heald's Engineering College. Before father

and mother were married he had beeb in charge of building a high tension line in Goldfield. I think it was after they were married, but I don't know for sure, that he was in charge of drawing or making the plans for the stormwater drains of Kansas City. He went back to all the records he could get about how much rainfall would come at one time, and then he allowed 10% more, and they had the largest recorded storm sometime after that and he was very proud that it turned out the drains handled it very easily. As perhaps part of his temperament he worked on different projects and/we were not quite two years in one place. From San Francisco we went to New York City where he worked in the Hudson Cement Company in which I think he had an interest. From there we went, I think, to Schenectady, New York, and I don't know what he did there, or just what it was in Chicago where we lived for two years. Then we went to Waterloo, Iowa where the water level was so high many of the ~~drains~~ graves were above ground. So he was an engineer in the Maytag company. And the man who was the head of the company decided to ~~start~~ make a washing machine. It must have been about 1910 or 1911. He wanted father to go to in with this with him. I don't know whether father wasn't sure there was a future in washing machines, but already he had become very interested in moving to Southeastern Oregon, so he told Mr. Maytag he wanted to continue being an engineer. So a railroad had been surveyed in the Alvord Valley in the Southeastern corner of the State of Oregon. So he hoped that he and several of his brothers and sisters and his mother might take up land, and several miles away was Wildhorse Creek which really offered opportunity for the generation of electricity, and he was very much interested in that. He was a person of real principle and religious beliefs, and he had a great fund of stories. But I never heard him tell one which would be considered risque or dirty. But I am sure the work he did, he heard many such stories.

Mother's family was Baptist and they also. Mother's family also went back to before the Revolution, and if you remember a picture of a general on a horse prancing down the steps, this was General Putnam who was one of her ancestors. Her family was English, German, and included Scotch ancestors. The latter I think came over after 1776. There are two unusual blue and

white bedspreads with deer woven into the border in the family. Her doctor brother had one of them, and I don't know who had the other. Mother's father was a piano tuner and also sold pianos. She was also born in New York State and just how old she was when they moved I am not sure. But she had her early girlhood in Encinetas which is several miles outside of San Diego. She enjoyed a great deal of fresh fruit, and she loved to swim in the ocean. Her father covered the area from Encinetas to San Bernardino which was at leaat fifty miles North of Encinetas. What I think is he went up and rode around which is now called the _____Valley, and Pasadena is at the head of it. It might be the San Gabriel Valley. He went from San Bernardino to Pasadena. He covered 50 miles a day on his bicycle. He later gave mother a piano. Grandmother Briggs ran a general store and so was not actually in the house with her children, although I think the store was adjoining the house. Mother was particularly fond of small children and helped the neighbors with their children. Probably she had to care for her youngest brother, George. The family moved to Los Angeles about the time that mother started high school. She went to Temple high School which must have been something like college now, because she took Greek and Latin and really got an excellent education in English. All I had to do was ask her if a sentence was right or wrong. I just said it over in my mind when I was in school and thought of the way mother would have said it, or the way she would have corrected us, and that was that. At the same time she was going to high school she studied piano with Dr. Skeele, and at the time she graduated he was asked to be the head of the new department of music at the University of Southern California and he wanted her to come and be a teacher in his department. But it was just about this time she went to help her doctor brother Roy.
I think you had a question about finances and I don't know whether you want me to take up that.

Q. It doesn't matter what order you put anything in or whether you want to leave something out. Just say what you feel about your family.

A. Our family was largely comfortable. Our father was working in these different places. It was hard on mother, the matter

of a move about every two years. He went ahead to get the work started and she had all the matter of moving and the care of the children. He didn't understand it was hard for her because his mother had always lived in one place and always managed things, and he didn't know some of these things. I don't think that he was at all intentionally unkind, but he didn't realize what ~~went wrong~~ hard work moving is.

From 1910 to 1912, when we lived in Waterloo, Iowa, we had enough to be quite comfortable, and his sister Clara's daughter came and helped with the housework. And the older children. ~~Gene~~ Jean and myself, and Leland. I went to hear Billy Sunday preach. And when I was four years old in New York City he (my father) took me to see Buffalo Bill's Show. And this is one of my first recollections - the shouting and the shooting, and the Indians on ponies.

When we homesteaded from 1912 to 1918 in Southeastern Oregon we had very little money. But I think it was harder on mother that there was no fresh fruit. We came into Vale, Oregon on the R.R. and it was 150 miles by wagon to where our homestead was. Part of the time we had a neighbor within a mile and another within four miles, and father's sister and her husband were within was it seven miles? Mother had never been a farmer or a rancher or anything like that so all of the things were strange. The railroad was not built through and father's older brother, Ward, won a suit against the P.L.S. Livestock Company which was really part of the Miller and Lux holdings that they could have part of the water which came down by the lake by which we lived. They won the lawsuit, but P.L.S. turned off the water.. So father did surveying at $10.00 a day and was really accurate because he could find corners that nobody else could. Partly because he was persistent, but mainly because he was so accurate in his surveying. Anyway, with the turning of the water off, my mother insisted that it was time the children had a chance at schooling, and somewhere along the line I'll tell you about our schooling there.

We moved down to Palo Alto in 1918. We went by Model T Ford. We went across the Cascades and down what today would be Highway No. 5 into California. Father volunteered for the first World War, but they said he was too old. Probably he could have stood up under it better than the younger men because he had been carrying his surveying instruments on his shoulder and walking

long distances. Anyway he went to work for the Young Men's Christian Association. And I think the funds at that time were rather inadequate. At the time of his death he was developing a summer home tract in a sixty acre fruit farm five miles above Los Gatos in the Santa Cruz Mountains. He had taken some people to see some land higher in the mountains and as he came back in the twilight there was a hole in the road and he didn't see it and overturned the car. He was killed and the other people were somewhat injured, but nobody else was killed. He had a $10,000.00 insurance policy, but it was one month back and the agent wouldn't take the money, which I understand is quite usual. So mother was left with some debts, some holdings in Chemeketa, + 5 children. So from 1923 to 1929 was really very meagre. There was no aid to children at that time.

I was going to tell about the children. I graduated from Stanford and my brother Jean graduated from Stanford. My next two brothers Leland and Ernest did not go to college at that time. Later Leland took an engineering course for merchant marine and did very well in it. Well, my sister Elrose who was born on my birthday, 13 years ~~younger~~ later, and my youngest brother, 19 years younger, they both went to San Jose State. She went for two years and completed her last two years at the University of California in Berkeley. Raymond went for four years and later got his Doctor of Divinity degree from Boston Theological Seminary, Elrose took a year of graduate work after her family was older and became a librarian. Jean came out of college just about the time the depression struck. It was very difficult for him to get work.

.....

Q. Let us recapitulate and list the children, the dates on which they were born, and their ages in relation to yours.
A. I was first. The second was ~~Wally~~ LittleRoy and he lived about a year. Jean was next. He is between three and fourr years younger than I am. The children came about once in two years. After I was born, the folks asked the doctor about a method of birth control and he would give them none. About the only way they could manage was by abstinance, and they were really very fond of each other, so we came about every two years. I think mother conceived very easily.
Q. As the oldest, what was your relationship with the other children?

A. Yes. I helped raise them, but mother never put as much housework on us as perhaps she should have. We never had chores except washing dishes. We did our dishes fairly quickly. We each had our own bowl and we had our own spoon. We washed them at the end of the meal, but we didn't have stacks of dishes.

With Jean I had a real companionship and we did a number of things that would ordinarily have been done by older children, chores that father gave us that mother thought were too hard. ~~XXXX~~ things that he had done as a boy. I know a couple of them might be interesting. I will just mention them. Father expected you to be responsible. If he said for you to stay someplace and that he was coming back, it didn't make any difference if he was somewhat late - you stayed. Because he said if you didn't stay there would be no way to find where you were. He sent us East ~~along~~ across the foothills when we lived at Mann lake to take a message to somebody who was about five miles over the ~~trail~~ ridges ~~that he road~~, and mother thought it was extremely dangerous, but father said no. As they ride, every ten minutes they turn around and look back, and as they come back they will recognize everything, and I'll give them a map, and when they get on the other side they will just tell whether to go one way or the other. Well we got across and stayed overnight there and came back the next day. Another time we ran out of hay and we had a cow and a calf. So we arranged with somebody who had hay that we would bring the cow and the calf down. (30 miles) Well the cow wasn't very strong because she hadn't been eating enough, and it was pretty cold, so the first day we managed to get 15 miles along, and the second day we managed to get there. It was a bit of a deal. But it was outside of mother's experience. To her it was extremely dangerous. To us I think it was extremely useful. So Jean and I had a chance to grow up and do things together. But Leland and Ernest didn't have the same opportunity. But Elrose and Raymond, I only knew them very little because I was gone from 1926. So I only really got to know them much later and I don't think they had a particularl warm feeling for me partly because we went to the Soviet Union and mother didn't want the children to be unduly influenced.

I stayed out of Stanford to do housework one quarter.

Q. Can you tell me a little bit about your religious training. Did you have to go to church.

A. I don't know that we had to go, but we certainly did go. And I can remember in Palo Alto that one child got on the stool, one after the other, and father polished his shoes to get ready to go because father, having lived on the frontier, you polished your shoes, and on the frontier you had a good Stetson hat, and you wore something in between, but this made you dressed. So you shoes always had to be polished. And when mother had gotten us all ready she didn't go. I think not because she was uninterested, but because she was tired and wanted a little time to herself. So we went to Sunday school and church and, as we got older, to the Epworth League. And the Epworth League really became the basis for our social life. Because we moved so much I didn't really have a chance to develop friends in school, not even in high school. We were three years in Palo Alto, but practically everybody else in Palo Alto had gone through grade school together you know. They weren't unkind to me, but as far as I was concerned I didn't exist for them. And so the church became my social life. I was very plump during high school and college. In the Epworth League I think I was an officer when I was in high school and a district officer when I was in college. In addition to that we had blessings at the table and we had family prayers at night. Everybody said a verse of the bible and you could kind of tell the temper of the person at the time. If you were feeling fairly good you might say "God is love." If you were really feeling out of sorts you would say "Jesus wept."

My social life began after I started to Stanford. There was a group of us from different churches who didn't have the money for the social life. At that time Methodists and others didn't dance if they followed the teachings of the church. So we went hiking, we had wienie roasts. We joined the Cosmopolitan club and so on.

Q. Relations with family?

A. Later my relations with all the family were better. For a few years there was a great difference in our interests. Somehow I had a room to myself since we were in Oregon and after my father's oldest sister died and left her covered wagon, I had a room. In Palo Alto I had a room with a packing

box for a desk. So I had a place to study, and it also gave me a place to go because I got pretty easily upset. I can never remember that my parents struck me. I think I would have been outraged if they had. I admired and respected what they both said. They may have when I was a child and I don't remember. The place where we lived the longest in Palo Alto was a house with a big sleeping porch, and every child had a bed on the sleeping porch, and I had the front bedroom. This I still don't understand. Jean sometimes came up and studied with me. About the family, I think both father and mother developed a loyalty as to members of the family. We took our trips and our holidays together and we weren't supposed to play ball on Sunday. But the folks would take a picnic lunch and go out into the hills on Sundays and then the boys could play ball and not interfere with anyone. We have a family round robin now and all keep in touch with one another. When father was killed Raymond was with mother and she said "Poor boy, now you have no father." and Raymond said, "Dear, why can't you be our father?"

We always ate together around the table. There was no TV then. We read many stories together. I think these are some of the things I wanted to bring out.

Q. Actually I think we have covered your schooling because it was so scattered, but I want to ask if you were interested in social problems when you were younger. Did the Epworth League give you anything?

A. In the first place I would like to say that father really had quite a bit of social understanding and concern. He always insisted that everyone must ~~work~~ lift on the load. When he walked along a trail, without breaking his stride, he always flipped out the rocks. He had a real sense of cooperation. He was strongly in favor of the League of Nations and I feel that I started to get a social perspective from him. Mother had a much greater understanding of the relationships between individuals and the matter of ~~social~~ cultural values, particularly music and other things also. So I feel I got something from her too. As far as the Epworth League and the Methodist Church were concerned, this was a period in which there was a good deal of interest in the social gospel, the social gospel being, as a matter of course, the application of Jesus' teachings to the life in society and not simply to the matter that you save your soul to get to heaven.

And the Epworth League had summer camps. I got to go to quite a few of those, and I think that some of the social questions were raised there. Then at Stanford they had assemblies with speakers, and many of them had concerns of this nature. Some of the fellows would invite the speakers over to the Student Union for lunch and have a change to speak with him more. Not in my first two years of college, but in my last two years at Stanford they invited a number of the girls to come too which was a little bit forward looking. This was just when we went into Stanford in 1917, so it was just after the Russian revolution. We didn't know too much about this. I took one or two courses in Russian History and found out a little bit. Probably from this professor of Russian history I began to get a little bit of understanding. But the boys, because they were interested in all these things, began to get the name "Bolsheviks".
One of the things at Stanford was that professors would have evenings at home. I went several times, so we had a chance to get a little more personally acquainted with some of our professors. Paul and I both feel that our interest in social questions was based on our activities in the Methodist church. On the campus Paul belonged to the YMCA who had a very forwa d looking secretary. There was no YWCA.

Q. You mentioned something about working since your family didn't have much money when you went to school. How did you help the family and yourself. What was your work experience?

A. Well I lived in Oregon froo 1912 to 1918 and had chores on the ranch. I took care of the chickens. I gathered bones and burned them. I killed jackrabbits and froze them. At school, which father's sister Emily taught (there were about 8 or 10 of us there) there was great competitionas to whose chickens laid the most double yoked eggs.

One of the things I did was that father was really interested in a system of analyzing and classifying. He wanted to have all the words which applied to people,so he said "Well, I'll tell you Violet, you read through Webster's Unabridged Dictionary and you pick out every one of the words that has to do with people and I'll give you a penny a page." So I made $20.00.

Father had a construction company in Palo Alto, the Palo Alto Construction Company, and I worked in the office for him when I was sixteen. When I was seventeen - I graduated in 3½ years fromPalo Alto Union High School because Stanford was offering anyone who started college, tuition was still $60.00 a quarter, they would let them complete their four years. Nobody knew whether the summer quarter would count so they let me graduate in 3½ years. With Paul in Modesto High School, he graduated in three years with the summer quarter, so it counted. So we each went through Stanford with tuition and student body fees of only $60. a quarter or $180. a year. That was one of the things that made it possible for us to work our way through. Justthe summer after I started there I worked at the Stanford Library typing cards. All student work was paid at a flat rate - 50¢ an hour. I was "hashing" waiting table for two quarters. Most of the time I lived at home, so I had room and board, but I paid for my clothes and so on. Earlier they had given me an allowance of $2.00 a week, and I don't know how they did it. but that $2.00 I really made stretch, and it was really wonderful to learn how to manage money. On campus my last year I lived on campug with a room mate. The girls were much more fortunate than the fellows, because if you had a room mate you had a living room and a bedroom on either side of it - a small bedroom. But with the fellows, they lived three and four in a room, and how they ever studidd is beyond me. Anyway, I assisted two professors. Then Paul, we graduated in 1925, and I announced our engagement in May with may baskets for our friends. Paul taught that year in Redwood City. Mother was very anxious for me to be at home, so I stayed with her and didn't work. Otherwise I would have worked. Then Paul was offered what was called a fellowship as a YMCA secretary in New York City. When they heard he was going to get married they said he couldn't have the job...it was $1,400.00 which was not enough for two people to live on, It made me rather angry because I had been working my way through school and I had also had the good fortune to get scholarships. I had a scholarship each of the four years at $300.00. This made me angry, so I got letters from the Dean of Women and certain other people that I was able to carry my own weight. So they relented and said he

could have the scholarship. So we went back to New York City through the Panama Canal with another couple who were recently married. When we got back there we found rents very high. So three couples got a five room apartment furnished and each couple got dinner two nights a week, and we really had a wonderful time. We took two years to get our Masters. I applied at the Department of Education Teachers College because they wanted a half time secretary. I could see the professor was making up his mind not to hire me. I knew that he, being a professor, would be very much interested in grades because they had to mean somethig. So I trotted out my transcript. And I had made Phi Beta -

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I was saying that I thought the professor was going to refuse to accept my application for being part time secretary for the department of education and psychology in the Teachers College of Columbia University. So I knew that being a professor he counted on grades, so I brought out my transcript, and I think I said a little about that and so I got the job. I was a part time secretary the first year, and then I was asked to be assistant instructor. We also applied to the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church because they were paying $5. a Sunday for people to teach Sunday School. And then I did some work for the girls club and the Pioneer youth and we were asked to be nature counselors the two summers. I think that pretty well covers the matter of jobs.

We lived in New York City from September, 1926 to June 1928 and got our Masters in education at Teachers College. Later I took summer schools I guess three summers in connection with fulfilling the elementary school requirements to teach in Oregon. Paul insisted that the teachers college was for both elementary and high school, and after I had taken all the work the Board of Education in Oregon agreed with him.

On the matter of travel--
(tape distorted so left this section out)
World Youth Conference in Holland - England - Rome - Sweden - Finland - Leningrade - Moscow - Turkey, Lebanon - Syria - Palestine.....
New York City, and we hitchiked across the country to save the

last three hundred dollars that his father had loaned us to get home on.

Basic interests

Now comes the matter of basic interests. I have always been interested in animals, and maybe the matter that I worked with cows and chickens had something to do with it. And the Youth's Companioon was put out for young people, and it had stories of courage and heroism, and also stories written up on the role of Indians in our country .... I liked the out of doors and I liked hiking.I think I was fond of the out of doors because having lived from the time I was 8 to 14 in the country, and then going to high school with people who knew each other, I didn't learn how to get along with people in groups too easily. I majored in history because I thought it would be more interesting. I was interested in the department of Ethics and Philosophy, but there were only two professors there. I studied and I learned the technique of how to get grades, and realized that it was just the system and not the amount of intelligence that counted. I submitted to authority although I had a great deal of independence. It seemed to be the way you got along. As far as school was concered. I felt at that time that I did not want to teach and decided to be a Director of Religious Education. After I had gotten my masters I was really equipped as a school psychologist. ~~My father~~ Paul had wanted to travel all his life so we (my husband and I) went abroad for two years on a shoestring. Then later, in 1946, we did teach. I think we enjoyed the teaching. I think that some of my characteristics were useful. I had a great warmth for the children. I had a sense of fairness and naturally they responded to that. I was fairly resourceful and creative. When we lost our jobs during the McCarthy period right after the beginning of the cold war I missed the children for some years. I think I never really found my interests too well. There was the question of routine. There was the fear after the witch hunt. I think the fear was not so much fear of persecution (although I never wanted to go to jail), I think the fear was a fear of isolation and not being able to have a relationship with people, and we haven't really taken up our social interests here but I think that will come on to when they develop. So some of this comes out to red-baiting yourself, which is very unproductive. I think I was always somewhat negative in my approach. I have a feeling that when I was in kindergarten and I went from 4 to 6 because my mother

believed in kindergarten...In many states there was a provision that if a certain number of parents petitioned, then the school had to provide a kindergarten. And mother went around and got petitions signed, and they needed more children, and I think, and there are more indications later, that they changed me from left handed to right handed. And I always seemed to have a tendency to worry; to look ahead and worry about things. It was partly a matter of wanting to plan and manage and so on.

The first few years after we were married I was really jealous of paul's friendly attention to other girls or women. I think there wasn't any special basis for it. I suppose that it came from the insecurity that we had left our families and went first to New York City and then to Moscow and anyway very occasionally I was jealous.

For clubs, there was the Epworth League, and in Stanford we were active in the Cosmopolitan Club, We also belonged to the Student Volunteers. Then Paul asked me, on his 21st birthday, whether we could plan our lives together. I thought I was very brave because I wanted to say yes, and did. At that time he was planning to be a medical missionary to India and I had a horror of cobras, although I got along with rattlesnakes quite well when I was in Oregon.

As far as sports were concerned, I mentioned that in Stanford in my sophmore year I got my numeral in Hockey. I mentioned hiking. I played some tennis. I took swimming but I never got to like it very well. I rode my bicycle to high school and college. I mentioned that, I belonged to the church at that time, we did not dance, and I am really sorry because we did take it up later - social dancing, folk dancing, square dancing. I really give the church credit for people putting in time and effort in having interesting activities for the young people.

I still have some friends from church days who came to our pot luck luncheon in Palo Alto a few days ago. But my best friends come from Stanford days and later.

Now comes the matter of the development of political and social awareness. I have mentioned that father had a real social outlook and emphasized responsibility, resourcefulness...we didn't read in the morning because the morning was for work no matter how much we wanted to read. Both father and mother had very little race

prejudice and I remember father saying "I would rather have my daughter marry a Chinaman than some of the other people I know." Of course Chinaman was a little bit racist, but at the time there was a great deal of agitation and emotion against the people from the Orient. On the Pacific Coast this was not a facist remark. Mother rented rooms to a man from Japan, and a Filipino, and the neighborhos didn't like it very well. And she trusted them enough that I had the front bedroom and the other two were sharing the bath, and she never worried about anything happening to me. Mother, I think, was interested in culture but also in health. Mother never had a doctor for us except when it seemed like a contagious disease and we had to put up a sign. She would rub us with ointment, and say "Now you are going to be better in the morning." And usually we were better in the morning.

Mother had a few close friends. She was very loyal to her friends and very devoted to her children. When she had the burst appendix she felt, inside of herself, "let them leave me alone. Just let them leave me alone." Many people were praying for her. Then it came to her that she had five children, and she decided to get ~~up.~~ well.

In high school I had a half year, the first half of my senior year, with a history teacher, and it was a great experience because he was ahead in his social thinking. I mentioned the matter that we had speakers from outside when we belonged to the Cosmopolitan Club. One of ~~his~~ Paul's very good friends - his father had been a socialist...and in Stanford we had this luncheon group which was nicknamed "The Bolsheviks".

I have always had a keen sense of justice. For quite a long time I accepted authority. I made one break with the authority and that was in our junior year we both joined the FOR, in 1924, which was a pacifist organization.

Q. What does FOR stand for?

A. The Fellowship of Reconciliation.

In the history department I learned a little bit about the October Revolution. It was very interesting. The professor got ~~his~~ materials ~~from~~ for the Hoover Library, which was very reactionary, but he had a different point of view. I shouldn't say very reactionary, Let us say reactionary. than the Hoover Library which is

In my Japanese history the professor emphasized the importance

of the Samuri. They provided art and culture. They had the leisure. I asked him, "Why should there be culture just for the leisure class. Why shouldn't there be culture for everybody?"

In New York city we were fortunate to be able to take classes in I think Old Testament and New Testament history with Harry F. Ward who was one of the great social prophets of that time and of the Methodist church. He was one of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union. He was one of the founders of the American Federation of Teachers. And he really reared several generations of ministers in the social gospet. And he went on to really understand what was goingg on in the Soviet union. He wrote one of the most interesting pamphlets in pointing out that the forms which we considered democratic were not the only ways in which democracy might go forward. Of course this was at a later time.

As I said, we worked with the Pioneer Youth which was somewhat related to the Socialist Party.

I was teaching sunday school at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and seeing people sweeping in in their silks + furs . . . . . and knowing that the Mission Church was just five blocks over but those people couldn't set foot inside. Well we lost our conception of the anthromorphic view we had been raised in. We didn't see how God could put up with something like this. We had interesting discussions - the six of us who shared the flat.

In 1928 we went to this World Peace Conference. I think Paul had met one Communist in New York City when he was arranging some kind of a united front meeting. The others said "We won't have him." and Paul said, "I think we should have everybody." At the World Peace Conference we met one communist and talked with him.

Q. Where was that Conference.

A. In Eerde, Holland.

Let us take up the matter of marriage.

Q. How did you meet in...I am very interested in that.

A. We will come back to that. We got married on June 19, 1926. We were both 22 years old. I had met Paul 5 years before in June of 1921 when my family took a trip to Yosemite Valley and we stopped to see ~~xx~~distant relatives in Modesto and went to the Methodist church with them. They introduced us to Paul and his family, ~~and~~. Actually his mother's brother was married to my father's second cousin, no blood relationship. But I never

told anybody for years. Anyway he was just about to go to Stanford to enter the summer quarter, so his folks invited me home - not the whole family - to have dinner. So we talked the whole afternoon about Stanford. When he came to Stanford - well it was a courtesy. Mother did not entertain usually, I think because we didn't have much money and she didn't have the possibility energywise or moneywise to entertain in what seemed to her the way to do it. Anyway she had dinner for him./ I don't know that he went with anybody very much, but he went with somebody else in his freshman and the beginning of his sophmore year. Sometime, I think during our sophmore year, we kind of started going together. We certainly went together during our junior and senior years. In our junior year we went on a family picnic. We went out in the hills, and he carved a heart on a tree with our two initials in it. That was before he was 21. And as I said before on his birthday he invited me to go for a hike in the hills. That was January 22nd, 1925 (it was in 1925. I said 1926 before because he was 21)...just a little bit more on this and I think we will finish what I have full notes on, and then I have partial notes which Paul and I discussed....Anyway he proposed on January 22, 1925, his 21st birthday. And I particularly appreciated then and later because he did not say, "Do you love me? Will you marry me?" But he said, "Do you think we could plan our lives together?" And we announced our engagement on May Day, 1925, as I have said, with Maybaskets with hawthorne in them, hawthorne blossoms. We considered the normal thing to do was to get married. We wanted to be together and I guess we considered that marriage was the only way to live out your life. I didn't get married to have someone support me. I worked practically all my married life. I think we got married for fellowship. I remember one of my friends saying, "You know we have been married a year. But you and Paul have been able to discuss things much better" - that was before we were married - She had met her husband and they were engaged for a few months. Then they got married but they never got acquainted. One thing that I think is veyy good, and I have pointed it out to other people, if you are thinking of getting married try to do other things besides going to parties. If you can see a man on a camping trip or something else you know a whole lot more, and he knows a whole lot more about you. So we had five

years of going together and doing things at Stanford together, doing things in the church and otherwise. Mother had not wanted me to rush any stage. For example she said, "Now look. Don't get married the same year you graduate. Graduate and enjoy that. Then get married and..." Actually mother wasn't too anxious that we get married. I don't think it was anything against Paul. But when he got the fellowship and was going back to New York City she said "I think you should get married. After all you are either going to be very miserable or you are going to give up your relationship." Mother told us, one of the last things she said was "Marriage has two bears, one is to bear and the other is to forbear ." I think we were deeply in love. We had seen each other in many situations. We had carried out mother's injunction not to kiss each other before we got engaged. But I wouldn't recommend that to other people. I didn't recommend it to my sister. When she asked me I said I think probably most people kiss each other first.

Q. From now on I think we we will take the narrative way..just go on sequentially from one thing to another because certainly we want to go into why you went to Russia and what you did there.

A. I have my notes along on the basis of the outline you gave us, and I think it will become chronological.

VIOLET ORR - 5/18/76 - second tape - second side -

Q. We want to find out why you went to the Soviet Union, you and Paul.

A. Well, while we were still in Stanford, either in our junior or our senior year, some of the fellows started up a little travel club. And one of the conditions for joining was that you would not get married before you had travelled, and I rather feel that they had their tongue-in-cheek when they made Paul President because we were already going together. Anyway, Paul always wanted to travel. So we thought that after we got our Masters (and being nature counselors and so on we had saved $700.00) that we would go somewhere and teach or do something. So we almost signed up with a Mission school in Greece, but one of the professors at Columbia University, George Counts, had just returned from a trip to the Soviet Union and he was down at the center where Paul was student secretary and said, "Oh my, you ought to go to Russia. You ought to go and see. I'll tell you, I'll write to the President of the Second Moscow University whom I met this summer and ask him if he wouldn't help you a little bit." So the senior secretary there had also been in Russia just right after the revolution. He was in Archangel with a friend who was ~~now~~ then the editor of the Journal of the Railway Engineers. They both encouraged us to go to the Soviet Union. Well the President wrote back that living conditions were very difficult. He advised us not to come, but if we came he would help us. So we thought well, Paul had lived on farms and I had lived on a ranch and we knew a little bit about difficulties. We thought we could make it. So we finished our term in the summer of 1928 being nature counselors. Some one of the people there gave us a book by Max Eastman. It was against the present policies, the policies at that time in the Soviet Union, which we read. As I mentioned, I think, Paul had only met one communist, and at the peace conference we met another. But we knew very little about Communism. I think I also already said we went to the world peace conference and went back to England to find where Paul's mother was born. Then went to Sweden, Helsingfores, and to the line between the Soviet Union and Finland, and the guards there just couldn't understand it. We had a trunk and eleven other pieces of baggage on a 30 days visa. But they couldn't

They are doing new things there.

find that we were taking any one thing in like if we wanted to sell it on the black market. And Paul had his albums of stamps and they were very interested in them, but they just didn't know why he had them along. Anyway, they checked everything over and we got in. We had a few days in Leningrad at the time of the white nights and went to the Hermitage, and saw the Czar's palace with all the beautiful fountains on the outskirts of Leningrad. Then we went on to Moscow and Albert Coyle I think had just finished leading the first trade union delegation to the Soviet Union and he was there and he helped us the first week as an interpreter. He had learned the Russian language which has three types of characters. It has Latin, Greek and Cyrillic. He particularly helped us with telephoning because,as far as I know,theere was no dialing anywhere, and every nation had its own way of saying its numerals, and in the Soviet Union it was kind of a sing song. It took us several weeks until we could finally say the numbers and the operator understood us, and we thought we had arrived. And he also got us a place to stay, which was extremely difficult, with a minister who was there... Julius Hecker and we gave his family a small amount for Board and room, for a week or two. The only time we paid for an interpreter the two years we lived there was when we went to see the President of the Second Moscow University, and we didn't think he did too well by us. He arranged for Paul to have like an extension course in commercial geography and me to have one in commercial English. But he did much better for us than we gave him credit. Because we were then officially employed and we could apply to have our visa renewed, which then enabled us to get it renewed every six months. And he knew what we didn't know - that there was a tremendous NEED for English and that we could get any number of individual students or groups and clubs or schools and one thing and another so we wouldn't have difficulty making money but we would have difficulty renewing our visa. Well he was right. Living conditions were more difficult than we had imagined. So I think that Reverend Hecker didn't have a place for us indefinitely and probably through Albert Coyle we had a chance to be introdoced to the author,journalist, writer, Anna Louise Strong, who was a journalist from Seattle. And I think she had worked there with the Quakers, and she now had a cooperative apartment with a living room, bedroom, kitchen and bath. She was about to leave

on a trip of several months to the mountains to study and write about the life there, and we had the opportunity with a woman to share her apartment while she was gone, which we did. We put up little notes various places and we began to get students. One was a red bearded Russian scientist and he was going to a conference and he read English, but he wanted to at least say a few words. Another was a young farm worker who was also going to some conference, and he wanted to be able to use some English. Paul also taught at a club for scientists and artists. They read English very well, but they wanted experience in conversation. Later they let me go to their rest home which was quite delightful out in the woods near Moscow. The first year we made an adquate living. We learned Russian by using it. We did our own marketing and we had a ration book. This was the beginning of the 1st Five Year Plan. Everybody's children had the same kind of ration book, and that was first, and they could buy in the government stores at controlled prices whatever butter, eggs and milk there were. The next catagory was for those doing heavy physical work, and they might be able to get some food in the state controlled stores. Then they, like those of us who had other ration cards, people in offices or teaching and intellectual work, had the next catagory. We had to buy our vegetables, fruit and milk on the ~~black~~ open peasant market. We could get cereals at the state markets, and some meat and fish. Anyway we learned. I would like to go back just a minute. After we left the President of the Second Moscow University we wanted a little treat so we went to a restaurant. So we could read "borscht", but there were a number of kinds of borscht. And there was one with quite a long word in front of it. It began with x and it was Xolodny borscht. And this was September and it was already getting, beginning to get really chilly. So we pointed to this and indicated to the waiter we wanted it. He shook his head - "no you don't want that." We were a little bit stubborn and we said yes, we would take it. So when we got it, it was borscht all right, but it had chunks of ice floating in it, and we very soon learned that Xolodny meant cold.

Anna Louise Strong wrote that she was coming home after about three months, so we began to look for a place. We were unaware of the law in Moscow that once anybody had let you into their

house, they could not put you out. And we felt she was coming home, we must go somewhere else. We couldn't find anythihg, but when she was due home we moved to a hotel. And this young farm worker, really an agronomist, we had been talking with him and he asked why we didn't drink wine. And I said well, it was ~~bitter~~ gorky, and that means it was bitter. I meant to say that it was sour. So he came up to our hotel room and he brought a bottle of muscatel, and he was going to convince us that good wine was not bitter. Well we had nothing there but the big tumblers for drinking. So he fills one up. I think I didn't drink it all, but by the time he was through with his lesson I could hardly walk with him and Paul to the door, and he laughed, he really laughed.

Paul may remember, because I don't remember, how we found a seven room apartment which had belonged to a rich merchant, and where there was a family unit in each one of the seven rooms, there was one man in one room, there was a student in another room, and in another room there were a husband and wife with a child, and there was a single woman, and I think in another room there were two men. They all shared the kitchen. Fortunately in the European style the toilet stool was in a room by itself, and the bath tub was in another room. I don't know how we found it.

Anyway the other women who was living in Anna Louise Strong's apartment stayed there...for quite a while. She didn't belong. She just stayed.

Through another friend we heard of this place and a student had what would probably have been the living room or the dining room, and it was quite a large room....Anyway, this student was studying at the Textile Institute. At that time they were not yet able to pay stipends to their students, so the house committee winked at the matter that he let us share the room.

We became acquainted with two young fellows from the United States, and together we began to visit schools, factories, collective farms, prisons. And with one of them in particular, who was a Harvard graduate, we began to discuss which knew better how to make the social changes in which we had become interested - the Church or the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. Actually nobody in the Soviet Union approached us on the matter of Communism. Nobody seemed to be concerned whether we heard about it, and

and certainly not to invite us to join. The only time was when I was teaching the Assistant Minister of Education english, and one time I said, "Of course there are no classes in the United States. Everybody has a chance to do things." It was a little bit too much for him. So he took a half hour off from our lesson to impress me with the fact that in all countries there were classes and the United States was no exception. I think this was in our second year. Then, later that year, he and his wife invited us to march with them in the May Day parade, which was quite an opportunity! She showed us how they linked arms because they had to do that in the old days to try to have the police not break up their line. He was the only person who discussed this.

Q. Did you march in the May Day parade?

A. Oh yes. Through the Red Square, past the stand. Stalin was not on the stand at that time. The parade lasted at least twelve hours, and the leaders took turns standing up there for waving and so on. So, we finally decided that we thought, even then, when things were still very hard, that the Communist Party knew more about solving some of the social problems of the day than the church and one of the things was that the first year (well, not the first year) in 1929 they no longer had anybody on the unemployed rolls, no longer any need to pay unemployment insurance. And I am sure that this impressed us then, as it has impressed us even more since, that from then on they have always had a shortage of people for the jobs, but it wasn't by happenstance. They knew what the increase in the population would be and they planned their building and one thing and another so they would have jobs. There was always a little more work than there were people to do it.

Well. We did travel as I mentioned a little earlier. We took a trip down the Volga. It was very nice. In our second year the Teacher's Union invited us to join. This gave us great opportunities because you bought tickets to the Bolshoi Theatre, for the ballet and operas, and to the theatres for something like 50¢, and we enjoyed more opera than in N.Y.C. And for the theatre - we had a friend there who was head of a travel agency and she would tell us of the play beforehand so we could enjoy it.

Then the question came, after we had been there two years, .. toward the end of the summer after we had been there two years

the question came up - should we return home or should we stay. We figured the second year that we were actually making more money than we had to have to spend and our second friend, a little Jewish fellow from New York City, got a job translating a textbook from Russian into English, and he asked us to help with it. So we got some extra money from that. We could have, in the course of a couple of years, gotten a cooperative apartment and could have made our living easily by teaching. But we decided that they had made their revolution. They had done the things that they thought were necessary to better their living conditions; that we were not at all indispensible to their progress. We had made up our minds, contrary to that of many other people, that they were going to make it. We figured that they were on the road. We felt first our family and our friends were in the United States. We wanted to be near them. And in the second place we felt that everybody had a responsibility to their country - to do and say whatever would be useful to help solve the problems in their own country. So we decided to return.

But first of all we took three trips organized by the Department of Education for the Soviet people, with reduced rates on railroads and staying at youth hostels which were often in schools. So we made a trip to Central Asia and saw the _____ at Tashkent, and particularly enjoyed Samarkand. We stayed in a Moslem ~~cemetary~~ monks' dormitoy when we were there. It is possible that this was a burial place. It seemed to me it was a church, but it wasn't just like the ones that had minarets on them. It had a great ~~bell~~ dome covered with blue tiles and age had destroyed some of it. But the blue tiles were like the sky. Anyway, we went on to the Caspian and saw the Black Sea. Then we went up to the Black Earth country and saw one of the first collective farms, and waited for a train for 24 hours waiting on the siding because freight went through when it was important and the passengers waited. That was where I started to learn patience. We returned through the Caucasus region and Tiflis. We would have liked to leave the Soviet Union through Persia, but there were no diplomatic relations between our countries and our passports had run out. Turkey would accept us. So we went out through Turkey. Now would you like me to tell you the countries we went through, or would you like me to say just that we went

back to the United States?
Q. I think you should just say you went back to the United States.
A. OK. So we returned to the United States and each went to visit our parents for a short time. And we were invited by the schools which we had attended, by the churches, and by a number of different places, to speak on our experiences. And we undertook to show that we must think of this country in terms of what it came from - which was illiteracy and great poverty,and you couldn't simply compare it with the most advanced industrial Western country. And we also spoke in favor of diplomatic relations between our countries, and against war. There had been intervention earlier.

There was an organization known as the Friends of the Soviet Union which had lectures and perhaps some concerts to let people know about the Soviet Union, and also work for recognition and against any resumption of war. The secretary in the Bay Area was in very poor health, and he was anxious to go to the Soviet Union at least on a trip. So he persuaded Paul to become the secretary of the Friends of the Soviet Union. Oh. In the Soviet Union they thought we were crazy to come back to this country in 1930 right after the crash in 1929.

We found a place to live in Point Richmond across the Bay from San Francisco,and lived there for several years during the depression without paying any rent. And we didn't know why the landlord didn't come. He told us later that he was very thankful to have somebody in the house taking care of it. It was two flats and we lived in the top one with a wonderful view across the Bay.

We found that the Friends of the Soviet Union was not able to pay as much salary as the former secretaryhad indicated. There were periods when we lived on $3. or $4. a week for the two of us. But lamb chops cost 5¢ apiece. We couldn't afford lamb chops. But we could afford other things. And Paul's folks had a farm near Modesto and we could go down and can fruit in the summer so that we had a relatively healthful diet.
Q. Where was the Friends of the Soviet Union Committee. Was it in Richmond?
A. No, it was in San Francisco. The Friends of the Soviet Union was a Bay Area organization with itsmain group in San Francisco

and a group in Oakland. You asked how we could get over to San Francisco. The ferries were still operating, and you paid for your car and 10¢ a passenger. So we would go down maybe half a mile from where the cars went from Richmond on to the ferry, and we would be where they had to stop somewhere. I guess they had to stop somewhere, and say, "If you don't mind, we would appreciate riding on to the ferry in the car, and here's the 10¢". Then we could walk off at the other end. So we went back and forth for 10¢ each way.

I worked with the Friends of the Soviet Union for a while. And I think they got us a car at that time, because it was about an hour's ride by street car into Oakland. I think I worked with the Friends of the Soviet Union first and then early in 1932 we joined the Communist Party. And Paul even waited for me to make up my mind, and I said I wasn't going to have anybody telling me what to do. And the real thing is that we had been convinced by our experiences in the Soviet Union, and not by anybody's talking to us about it, that it really took socialism and the ownership of the factories the farms and the land by the working people, and then planning the economy to serve the people, to really make a foundation for solving the problems which we had been concerned about in our own country. Of course at that time the unemployment was terrible, and socialism was possible not only in the Soviet Union but here.

OK by mw 28

VIOLET ORR - third tape - 5/18/76

Q. I am interested in when you joined the Communist Party. Was Paul the first one to join, or did you join together, or what?

A. (Paul speaking) We joined together in celebration of Lenin's birthday, in Jan. 1932.

Q. How did you come about joining.

A. Shortly after we came back from the Soviet Union we were asked to head up the Friends of the Soviet Union, and they had an office somewhere down on Market Street. So we participated. We started organizing the organization better in different parts of the Bay Area. And we participated in other activities of the Left Wing movement, particularly in San Francisco, but also in the East Bay. The International Labor Defense was formed about the same time here. And there were Communist Party activities. We more or less participated in all of them. And Morris Rappaport and Pop Hanoff and Sam Darcy, they were all leaders in the Communist Party at the time in this area, and they kept on asking when we were going to join. And I kept putting them off. Violet wasn't quite convinced yet. She had some reservations. But we decided on Lenin's birthday, the 21st of January, 1932, we signed up cards

Q. OK. Thank you. Now Violet, Paul said someting about being involved in other things besides Friends of the Soviet Union. What other things?

A. Well, I think possibly we should stop for just a minute.

Q. You said you went to Russia for the second time then.

A. Yes. I think it was in 1931 we had written to the Open Road, (It was a travel agency for professional people) saying, did they need somebody who had a working knowledge of Russian to lead a group. And they said yes, they had a group of people going including some teachers, an editor, and a treasurer for one of the national magazines, and they would pay for my expenses from New York City to, well actually to Moscow and down to Stalingrad, and back again to Moscow. So,through the Friends of the Soviet Union in other cities, we made arrangements for me to speak in three or four places in order to make the money for my bus fare across. Naturally we went on a ship across the Atlantic.

I had gotten a little bit tired of people complaining of the lack of toilet paper in the Soviet Union and one thing and another, so I let the people know that conditions were difficult - they might not have a private bath (very conveniently,) they couldn't be sure just what they could have to eat. So, when we got there, they had a bath between the rooms for the men and for the women. They shared a bathroom. They thought everything was wonderful because they really had a bathroom. And they got four meals a day. And I undertook to make them comfortable. There was not instant coffee, but I took powdered coffee. Everybody was drinking tea, particularly on the trains, so they wouldn't have had their coffee. So we had an interesting time. And we had an interpretor for our group. But if the group wanted to do two things I knew enough Russian to take half of the group, and she would take the other half. And we had a delightful time going down the Volga on a big new steamer. And I found that the captain of the steamer was the one we had gone up the Kamer River with on a much older boat before. Before I left the Bay Area I went down to see one of the editors of the Chronicle to see if he would like some articles. And he said Yes I could send some articles in and they would pay me 25¢ an inch. So I sent several articles and they were published. One was on Stalingrad, especially the tractor plant and right now I don't remember what the others were. But they published all of the ones that I sent. I with the group The group came back to Moscow and I saw them off, but I stayed a week or two with one of our students down there. Then I went to Berlin, and who should I meet but Harry Joffee, and this was the second fellow in Moscow that we had, you know, gone around visiting with. So he showed me Berlin, which I really wouldn't have known. And this was just before Hitler came to power. We still went to one big workingclass rally at the sports palace, it seems to me it was called. I went to Paris and met two of the teachers who had been in my group. They showed me Paris. I went through Warsaw. Was just a few hours off the train in Warsaw where, of course they also spoke Russian. They hated it, but they knew it, so it gave me a chance to talk a little.

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Paul: Didn't you meet Big ~~Big~~ Bill Haywood in Moscow, and talk to him.

A. I think - sometime in Moscow I met Big Bill Haywood on a street car. I don't know whether someone used his name or something, because I didn't know him by sight. But we did have a little chat there. So then I came back to New York City and once again spoke three or four places about various things in the Soviet Union to get my bus fare back home again.

Paul: Tell about Lunacharsky.

A. It has just come to my mind that, when we were first in the Soviet Union teaching, we really had the great opportunity of meeting the Minister of Education (called the Commissar of Education) Anatole Lunacharsky who was really a giant in the cultural world in not only education in the usual sense, but culture, and had the respect of all the professional people in the Soviet Union whether they completely agreed or disagreed with what was going on. He was internationally known, and we had half an hour with him. He opened a drawer and showed us he had been reading Beard's History of Civilization. He ~~is~~ was really one of the great cultural figures in our whole world. I mentioned the Assistant Minister of Education, and I think his name was Pistrak We also met the Commissar of Agriculture, and I actually gave him lessons (English) for quite a while. I believe his regular teacher was gone and he wanted to continue, so I gave him lessons.

Q. Was this when you were there the first time.

A. It was the first time. Paul is recalling that.

Q. Just as long as we know.

A. I didn't do any teaching the second time I was there. I was in the country maybe a month.

Q. Was this before or after you joined the party.

A. I don't know. Maybe I can find something in the papers I've kept for memoirs.

Q. It's not that important. You wouldn't have said "I'm a member of the party." when you went back there. That wasn't done, was it.

A. What I did say - I asked about - I said that we were active in the Friends of the Soviet Union, and they sent me to the trade union headquarters. They said, "What can we do for you?" I said, "You don't need to do anything. I am staying with a friend and I have money to buy my food." "Well, we would be happy to do anything for you." They expected I was coming asking for a hotel room, lodging and, you know, hospitality. So they were a little bit nonplussed. I came over to say "hello". But this was interesting. There was a part of the day, where I lived with my friend Valentina on the seventh floor of an apartment house, when we got no water...in the late afternoon because the pressure was so poor. And it was in the next few years that Stalin took it up with the Mayor and the Council of Moscow that there were two necessities for Moscow. One was water and the other was transportation. They did work with the rivers, and they brought a lot more water into Moscow, and they started the Metro system. But we never had a chance to see the Metro.

Q. Then what happened when you got back to the Bay Area.

A. Somehow along the way the new Party Organizer in Oakland asked me to be the Organizational Secretary in Oakland. And the organizer was Rudy Lambert. So I worked for maybe a year and a half there. And I remember when William Z. Foster came through (I think it must have been in the election campaign of 1934) he was running for President, that I took the collection. At that time there were still silver dollars in the bay area. So I said, "OK, OK, if you want to throw silver dollars at me, throw silver dollars at me." And the men began throwing, and they didn't really try to hit me, and Oleta O'Connor Yates, who later joined the Communist Party and became the (I guess it was Executive Secretary, or was she chairman in San Francisco) - this was the first meeting she had come to. She was a student at the University of California, Berkeley, and she came to this meeting, and the first thing she saw, she said, was people throwing silver dollars at me, up on the stage.

Q. What were some of the daily activities of the party

whileyou were there. What were some of your activities?
A. I never worked directly with Unemployed Councils. You see the work of the Communist Party was really to agitate people that they knew that things were bad, but it was possible to do something to change conditions; to educate them, the fact that the working people really had the capacity to understand problems, and that if they worked together they could do something to change them; and to help people organize, not only to get new members for the Communist Party, to organize new members' classes, but also to help people in organizations like the Friends of the Soviet Union and the trade unions, to help them see a way that might offer some activity that their members could take advantage of to improve their living and their working conditions.

The agitation involved speaking on street corners. And this was foreign to the way I had been brought up. And this was rather hard for me, but we felt that socialism was so important that if any of these things had to be done we would try to do them. So I spoke on a street corner. Of course a woman is always a little more of a curiosity than a man. So it always helped. Not that I was the only woman speaking on a street corner, but I mean that when a woman spoke it added something to the matter of a street meeting. Of course there were many men who spoke better on a street corner and got more of an audience than I could as a woman. But we did that. We were really helping to organize Unemployed Councils. At that time unionleaders were completely - let us not say completely, that is ~~pretty~~ too ~~raw~~ swaying - were very little interested in the matter of the unemployed. They didn't allow them to remain in the unions. They didn't feel that the plight of the unemployed was really tied up with their own conditions. Now this was the leadership - I don't say all of them. And the Communist Party raised the slogan and helped to organize to get unemployment insurance. There was no unemployment insurance at that time. They (party) also brought forward the idea and worked for social security which, both of these things, we now take for granted. There was a rank-and-file movement in the trade union movement, called the Trade Union Unity League, ~~which did work for unemployment insurance~~ social security payments.

(T.U.U.L.) and these people in the unions took up the matter of unemployment insurance and social security, and they worked for it very hard. In the course of the next few years we did get laws passed which are the basis of our having it today. We organized classes, classes in Marxism, the science of the working class, and its role in society. We had various speakers who came at times, even at times that weren't election times, and we had all the details of organizing meetings, getting a hall, getting out leaflets, and one thing and another. Some of our members worked very closely with the Unemployed Councils in setting up soup kitchens and actually getting donations, so as to have food that could be given ~~at~~ out - that the Unemployed Councils could have. And whether people were members of the Unemployed Councils (there was certainly not any necessity to be a members of the Communist Party) they could come and get kind of a vegetable stew. Maybe it had meat passed through it, it was mostly vegetable stew.

Q. What other activities did you participate in as a leader in the Communist Party at that time.

A. Maybe I mentioned classes in Marxism. We had classes for new members where we helped them to understand the Constitution of the Communisty Party, and what our understanding of democratic centralism was: all of the committees were elected and the policy was discussed, and then when it was decided upon at a convention everybody undertook to do their best to carry it out. And between conventions the national committee had the right to analyze problems and make decisions. And there were conventions of anywhere from periods of three to four years.

Q. Did you participate in any parades of demonstrations.

A. Yes, of course I did. But this was forty years ago. And right at the moment I don't remember any specific demonstrations. I know there were a number of demonstrations in Oakland, and I know I took part in time, but I am not in a positionto give particular details because they don't come back to me now. There was one, I think, later in San Francisco. In that one the police were all mounted on horses and trying to break up ~~at~~ on

the demonstration of well 1000 to 1500 people. And you can get pretty scared when a man bears down on you on a horse. But I was raised on a ranch, and when he came toward me I grabbed the bridle of the horse and he (the policeman) looked awfully scared. And, of course, I didn't take part in any dismounting of policemen. But in demonstrations of the unemployed at that time there were ..if you had three people,one could take the horse,and two could take the policeman, and he wasn't mounted any more. And when conditions get so serious that people don't have food and they are being thrown out of their houses and their electricity is being turned off you can understand that actually taking a policeman off his horse, who is riding down on you, isn't really something that is to be unexpected. So, maybe what you want to know is that the Oakland branch, or the Oakland (it wasn't just a branch - it was more like a county - it was really the ~~Oakland~~ Alameda County) of the Communist Party of which I was organizational secretary..that included Contra Costa County. So then we got members in the factories in Contra Costa, and they decided that we should have a Contra Costa County Communist Party. And,of course, we were living in Point Richmond, which is in ContraCosta County. So they asked me to be the organizational secretary there, and one of the men (wasn't he a welder?) Corwin Moore - he was the organizerof the Party and I was the organizational secretary. This was probably beginning in something like 1933. It was a time when there were beginning to be more and more marches of the unemployed all over the country which finally culminated, I think, in two big cross country marches to Washington D.C. which finally began to - which finally got the Works Progress Administration (The WPA) that a person could have some work with some wages on Government projects. And many cities and counties and national parks had the chance to use this labor. They ~~x~~ workers could have dignity. They could have very modest wages,and they could have - well, that's the main thing. For a while there was a lot of talk about the men leaning on their shovels. But if you look in the

national parks and you look at the old highways you will see very fine masonry work, and this is one of the things they did. Then later there became artists and writers projects, and some of the finest guide books for our states are the ones written by the workers on the WPA.

In Richmond we had a street meeting down on the corner. As these marches were taking place all over the country we felt we should try for one. We just really didn't know a thing about organizing a march. But we urged the people to come, and we took up the needs, and we set a date that we were going to the County Supervisors, and I think 100 people went from Richmond to Martinez, ~~the capitol~~ (the county seat) and I think the supervisors were scared. And I think all over the country supervisors were getting kind of scared, and the authorities were. And well they might because while we got along on very little money without rent, we had no children, and we had some source of food from the farm (Paul's parents'), other people had nothing. I mean they didn't even have three or four dollars a week that we had. Then I think as we worked for the organizations we got some expenses. And if we had to stay overnight somebody gave us lodging and a meal. So about this time in Richmond the City Council decided that they didn't like the leaflets that were being put out. Perhaps it was Standard Oil particularly that didn't like them, because there was a shop group of party members in Standard Oil and one of the things we did was to get out a shop paper. And Paul and I went to the gates where the men came out of the StandardOil Refinery in Point Richmond and very soon they eagerly grabbed the leaflets as they went by in their cars as fast as we could give them. And the men who worked there, we worked together. They told us about conditions, and we all decided what we could put in, and I imagine it was Standard Oil who spoke to the supervisors that they didn't like the Communist Party putting out leaflets. So an ordinance was passed that no leaflet could be put out unless it was passed first by the Chief of Police. Naturally this was the same thing as saying that no Communist Party leaflet could be put out. So I guess the County Committee of Contra Costa put their heads together, and they said, "Well,

this is an election period. We had better have somebody run to be elected. And, after all, they will be putting out their campaign material, and that is kind of a hard thing to arrest a person for doing." So it was jointly decided that probably the best thing was for me to run for the State Assembly. So we got out a leaflet urging people to vote for me for the StateAssembly. Probably it was the election of 1934. I guess the elections were in the even years, but I don't know positively. (It may have been in 1933. Quite likely it was 1933.) So I walked around in one section of townputting out my leaflets for becoming an Assembly member. I think the police felt a little bit sheepish about arresting me when I was putting out my leaflets. I don't know for sure. Anyway, they were polite to me at the police station, and they set my bail at $50.00. Well, $50.00 was an awful lot, because we had an old mimeograph machine, ran it on newsprint. And we made the ink out of, well oil that would come out of crankcases, and somewhere we got soot to put in it. But, you know,if you are getting out your leaflets that way you didn't have any money for bail. So they arrested me about three o'clock in the afternoon. And about 6 o'clock they brought in a plate of some food. It was some beans and I don't remember what else,but I guess they and I thought I would be staying in overnight. This was the first time I had ever been in jail, and actually it was the last time I was ever in jail. I don't know how that worked out. Well, I had eaten my supper. Pretty soon there came a knock at the door, and they said, "A committee has come with your bail." I don't know how it happened. But, anyway, they took me in front, and they counted out nickles,dimes, quarters, and I suppose there most have been some dollars, but the rest had scurried around to everybody who was at all interested, not only party members, and sympathizers,but other people, and they said, "Well, she was running for election and they arrested her." Anyway, they came in with $50.00 in small change, and I went home to bed.

Well, we went on putting out our shop paper. Oh yes, I must finish this up. So the trail was held in Richmond, Municipal Court and the City Attorney prosecuted, and I was found guilty

of violating the city ordinance. And I don't really know - it was a suspended sentence probably I got. I don't remember. I don't think I was sentenced to jail, and I don't thinkI was sentenced to a fine, so I suppose it was a suspended sentence, but they wanted to maintain their ordinance and not seem to be persecuting me. But we had the International Labor Defense by that time. That was one reason that people could -

Q. Do you remember how many votes you got?

A. Well, I want to tell you, you see, we did have the ILD and the lawyers who gave their time to it and got just a little bit for expenses, and George Anderson was one of these. So, the ILD appealed this case for, after all, the ordinance was still upheld, and it was a violation of freedomof speech. So he appealed it and we went to Martinez to the next higher court. I don't remember how I got over there. I guess George Anderson picked me up and took me over. ~~Then~~ after the trial he had to go on to something else. Anyway, the decision of the Richmond court was overturned, and the right of freedom of speech was re-established, and the police could not have the right to determine which leaflets were put out. I didn't have any way to get home, and the City Attorney offered me a ride,so I came back with him, and he spent his whole time trying to find out something I wanted. But it happened that the things I wanted were not in his power to give.

It was George Anderson bringing up the constitutional implications of the police having the right to decide whether anybody could put anything out without their agreement.

The men in our shop group came to us one morning all excited. One of the main things the shop paper had been talking about was a union. There was no union in the Standard Oil Refinery. So the Company had decided to start one of their own. So they came and gave us the information. And we got it run off. We didn't run it off, one of the men ran it off (one of the men who was not in Standard Oil) and we went down as the men came out in their cars from the plant that ~~night~~ afternoon leaving from the day shift and put the leaflet out, and the

company union did not go over. And several years later when the men were able to get a National Labor Relations Board election the NLRB representative ~~attorney for the union~~ said, ~~or someone said~~, "We have a leaflet here that was put out several years ago on the matter of the company union, Would you like to hear it?" And they said, "Oh, yes." Well, he said, "It begins - 'Free balony tonight in the cafeteria.' " and everybody roared.

So, in 1934 the longshoremen on the San Francisco waterfront had been working very hard to organize a union because I believe it was a contract matter and certain bosses hired the men - I will not go into the matter of how they were being hired before, but the - I think everybody knows the conditions were very difficult and the wages were low - so there was a longshore strike in 1934. At our street meetings we took the side of the longshoremen. Of course we put out the Western Worker, which was the Communist paper and which supported them in their demands. Right at the height of the strike one of the Communist party members came to us in the morning and said - told ~~me~~ us that "they are going to send vigilantes to your house tonight." Then, at little later I think someobdy else came and told us this too. And the interesting thing is a friend from out of town dropped by. We had no car at that time. The car we had used belonged to the friends of the Soviet Union that I drove for a while. A friend of ours from out of town came by, and we said, well the vigilantes are apt to come tonight. He said, "I think the best thing for you to do is to gather up some belongings and let me take you somewhere. I just wouldn't stay." And, a little later, somebody else from out of town dropped by whom we were not expecting, and they said, "Let us take some of your things." So we went to a friends in Oakland, I guess, and that night sure enough the vigilantes came and they were drunk and had clubs and they ransacked the house and stole various things (a very few papers we got back) but they stole our personal belongings like silverware. And they broke up a beautiful mirror we got at our wedding. And our friends always thought that if we had been there some one of them who was drunk and so forth could have killed us.

Q. May I ask a question. Who were the vigilantes.
A. Well the vigilantes were - one of them was the one who collected bills for the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. And I talked with him later through the door. And I suppose some of them might have been some workers at the plant whom they got drunk, and, I think, people from the American Legion were there. And I think they kind of rounded up particular people and got them drunk and then inflamed and so on. After the third day the District Organizer said, "That's all right that you left, but now you have to go back." Well, we went back, but we didn't feel like living out in Point Richmond. The landlord came to see us, and he said, "If you had told me you were leaving, I would have come over, and I would have told them that I was holding your things for unpaid rent, and maybe I could have saved them." And we hand't seen him more than two or three times in our lives. But I think he was a foreign born worker. So we decided we really couldn't live right out beside the refinery any longer, and we went into the main part of Richmond and we found a tiny four room flat for $12.00 a month, which we didn't have. But the landlord knew what had happened, and I said to him, "We have an unpaid electric bill out there, but I am unwilling to pay it because the man who collects it was one of ~~those~~ the vigilantes who came." Ordinarily you had to pay your own bill at this place. But I said, "If you are willing to put in your name I will pay the bill, but I am not going to pay the other one if they encourage their men to engage in things like this." So he said, "Ok, I will." So, he did and the man came up once, and I spoke to him through the door and I said, "I am not paying you the bill because you and your company countenanced this." And that was the last time he ever came around. But another man who came to see me was the Presbyterian minister. He came partly to support, I think, and he came partly out of a great intellectual curiosity. Why was it that we were so interested in socialism. Why were we members of the Communist Party, and so on. Oh, we had quite a good talk, and I explained the matter to him, and I don't remember that he ever came again. We had not been attending church. Our ~~papers~~ church letters were still in Palo Alto

in the Methodist Church. And there were certain aspects of church life ~~that~~ of the institutionalized church, which many people don't feel really carried out the principles Jesus undertook to live, ~~andso on.~~

Q. Can we stop now. This is one of the things I've been wanting to ask you. Do you find any contradiction between your being a member of the Methodist Church and being a member of the Communist Party.

A. Well, the things that we had learned and appreciated most in the church were the things which we saw ~~xx~~ the Communist Party working on. And in the 1930's it was really remarkable. Therewas no problemthat came up but what the membersof the communist Party would find some way to start to work on it. It was really tremendous. In old Czarist Russia the Greek Orthodox Church was an arm of the Czarist secret police, and what you said in confessional was known within twenty-four hours to the police. So it is understandable that the Bolsheviks, of whom Lenin was the leader, who lead the Russian Revolution, were not at all friendly to the Greek Orthodox Church, although it has always been in the constitution and has always been practiced that people were free to go to church, the Communists in the Soviet Union, none of them were church members. Now in many other countries of the world (in Italy and France, which has ~~one of~~ the largest Communist Parties outside of the Soviet Union) there are many people who take Catholicism as their religion and Communism as their politics. I was very interested some years later, when Paul was called before the Un American Activities Committee and the Society of Friends was told by one of their members that we were members of the Communist Party, and one of the women with whom I had worked in the Council of Churches and in the peace movement invited us to join the Society of Friends. And I said, well, I didn't know that Friends or Quakers also belonged to the Communist Party, and she said, "Oh there are lots in Europe. You know, it is like the Catholics. They take this as their religion and they take that as their political expression." Well, we did not join at that time because the Quakers are really dedicated pacifists and, while we have spent a good share

of our lives working against war, we didn't feel that we could take a philosophical position that would put us where we should really say to the colonial peoples that they should not use any force to try to get their independence. We would not urge them to use guns andone thing and another,but after we had used guns for three hundred years against them we felt that they had to be at liberty to choose. So this was the matter: there are certain wars which Marxists consider are just wars. That is, that the people win more from them than it costs them. The American revolution is one of these. There are other wars that are strictly imperialist wars, like the first world war where the peoplelose on all scores. It was a division of property among the worldsmostpowerful nations. But we certainly appreciated the fellowship and the support of many of our friends amongst the Quakers in Pasadena. Also,at another time, we lost our jobs during the McCarthy period,and one of the people who went to the School Board without knowing us was the Methodist minister. He spoke on our behalf and then he came to see us. He said, "I think the best thing for you to do is to get your letters from wherever they are.." Somehow he knew that we had been brought up Methodist, and he said, "Joinour church here in Lebanon." We said we were not sure his members ~~people~~ would want us to join. He said, "I think I can managethat. You send for your letters." So my brother got the letters. Really resurrected them because it had been quite a while. So we went and the people really received us graciously. I am sure they were somewho didn't, ~~but I wanted to.~~ I think somewhere later we will talk a little bit more about the matterof religion if it is pertinent.

Q. Then you moved out of the one house in Point Richmond and moved downtown.

A. We moved downtown, and I guess the one I said was the District Organizer was really the State Organizer. And he said, "Paul, I think we needyou in the farmwork." Paul accepted, and he wentout visiting farmers, and I stayed by myself. That was a little bit on the hard side. ~~For a while~~ I got one of my brothers to get me a revolver. Andfor a while I had the revolver. When the man came from the P G& E I had it,but I didn't threaten him. He was on the other side of the door. He didn't know I had it. But we made up our minds very soon that gunswere not for us; that the help of the peoplewas really the only protection that really

helping to organize the United Farmers League

counted. So we gave away the gun. There was one of our friends who wanted one, so we gave it to him. And we never kept a gun in our house after that.

I was wanting very much to work in a women's industry and be part of a union myself.

Oh, I must say at the time the vigilantes came, I think one thing they were looking for was the records of the Contra Costa County Communist Party. Some of the records were there, but we had hidden them. But another list of the members - there was a woman who was a very good sympathizer. I went to her and asked if she would keep them, and she said yes. I said, "It would really be better if you were a member of the Party if you kept them." So she joined the Party so she could keep the records. Nobody ever lost their job. There was one man who did lose his job. But everybody said that he had talked far too much for months on the job, and that he lost the job because of what he had said. Nobody else ever lost their job, which showed that they did not find the records, which they hoped to find.

So, in 1935, we asked to have the right to transfer to San Francisco. I don't know just why I chose the laundry industry. It wasn't the time yet when it was very easy to get a job anywhere. So, I tried to get a job, and I got a job in a curtain laundry, and I learned to stretch curtains which is fairly difficult. I don't remember why I lost that job. I became active in the union. The leadership of the union was there for the money they could get, and they cooperated with the bosses. But I got another job ironing curtains. Our constitution or by-laws provided that everybody was to march in the Labor Day parade. That was still a time when there were great parades up Market Street. So, you either marched or you paid a $5.00 fine. Well, I talked to the girls about how important it was to march and really what an honor it was and so on, not only in my own shop but in the union as a whole. I don't say I got out such lots of people, but a number of people went. The president and the business agent were mad because what they wanted was the $5.00. So the business agent went to the owner of the laundry where I was

working and urged him to fire me because I was stirring up trouble with the girls. So he did Actually it was because they didn't get the $5.00 in. Then a very good friend of mine, a very fine Jewish woman, was working in a laundry. She got the employer, who was something of a sympathizer, to hire me. The girls who stretched were really a clique. They didn't want anybody else doing it because it was one of the skilled operations and got paid a little bit more. I had no chance to stretch there, so I was put on mending curtains. That was a time when there were lots of lace curtains. I wasn't very quick. And my friend Ray said to me (Ray Koblick) "You bungle them together any way. You just push that needle. You get them together. He doesn't care how it looks. They'll pressit after. It won't show much. You do it." Since that day I've been able to do hand sewing pretty fast. I really learned on that job. Then he gave me another job. It was fluting the edges of the curtain. You had two gears that rolled together and made the crimp. It was almost more than I could do to do that eight hours a day. It was a tremendously monotonous job. The only variation was with different kinds of material you hadto do it a different way. When I was ironing curtain, also you had to do it differently, but that I could do much better. And the boss likedme because I was off by myself. I just kept on working. He didn't have to keep running over. That's where the business agent got me fired.* Anyway I did that into 1937; ~~Then the Western Worker had been - -~~ I spoke on the floor of the Union. Somehow they asked for volunteers on the By-Laws Committee, and I volunteered. And one or two of the other women volunteered. We really got some good by-laws through in spite of the officials. We got out a shop paper there. It was called the Shake Out. We had a picutre of two girls at each end shaking a sheet because, before they put the sheets in the mangle they always had to shake themout. In the middle was the boss - this little boss, and he was bouncing up and down. Of course the employers didn't like the paper. And the union leadership, which was corrupt, was known to be a corrupt one - we were

* Laundry Workers Union, Local #6, AFL. Lawrence Palacios, Pres. Did not know name of Business Agent. i.e.did not remember

getting $18. a week - that's what we were getting. Many of the women were supporting families because the men couldn't find any work. That was a time when Paul had great difficulty in finding anything. The only time I ever knew him to get discouraged. I wanted you to know about the Shake Out because it was really a paper that the women liked to read.

Q You had one question here,"What was the attitude of people toward me as a woman." I want to say, at that time the Communist Party in the U.S. did not understand the importance of equal rights for women and actually working on the matter. They already understood it in the Soviet Union. It was in their constitution from the beginning. However, it took them a long time to get it worked out in practice, too. I mean I couldn't get anybody who was interested in giving me any advice, or helping me at all in what ~~you~~ I did. Of course I was green in anything as far as Unions were concerned. I had heard the men tell about what they had done. One person from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union did help me. That was Minnie Carson. We did have - I can't remember- yes, I think we had a little club that had laundry workers in it. Rae and I were in it, and I can't remember who else, and there were other people who were sympathetic. They would give the paper to some ~~people~~ other laundry workers. They would put in a little money for mimeographing the paper, and they would support us on the floor, ~~and so on.~~ Of course we weren't talking about Communism on the floor. We were talking about the conditions of the women and carrying out the contract. One of the things we tried to go four - our contract called for an hour's lunch. The women preferred to take a half hour's lunch because then they could go home sooner. Actually they were much tireder at the end of the day if they only took a half hour lunch. If they took the hour, they were ahead. This was something the men had worked out over the years - that you were better off with an hours' lunch time because, when you got through, you weren't exhausted at the end of the day. I think that kind of wrapped it up.

Q. The question was, was your communist work within the union so you didn't do other things.

A. Of course I attended some meetings, and I did do some things. But as a communist in the union it was my business to help carry out the constitution and the by-laws of the union; help the women to understand it; help the women to understand they could dosomething and not leave it all to the business agent and the president. I think this is the business of a communist in any organization - to help carry out the best policies of that organization - to rally the membership. Almost every people's organization in the Uni ed States has a much better purpose and constitution and by laws than is carriedout.

Q. We have a little whilelonger. Do you want to go on to the next period in your career?

A. Well, we could start it.

Q. Why did you quit the Laundry Workers' Union then.

A. I quit working in that laundry because the communist party was growing and the needs of the working people were growing , and we had come to the place where we thought we could have a daily paper - instead of the Western Worker, the Daily People's World. We planned to start it on January 1st, 1938, and I had worked and gotten quite alot of subscriptions for the Western Worker, and gone to a press conference, ~~and so on~~. So, they asked me if I would get a page of advertising in San Francisco for the first issue of the Daily People's World. I quit my job in order to do that. Of course there were a few ads ~~for~~ from friendly merchants, there were greetings from individuals; there were ads of different organizational affairs, parties that were going to be held, & meetings, ~~etc.~~ So that was the reason that I did it. Also because I ~~am sure~~ felt there was not the understanding of the importance of work amongst women, then and particularly of the ~~work amongst women, and~~ amongst women in industry. It was an undeveloped spot in the communist party & and it probably it was ~~partly~~ largely due to the male domination in our whole society. They party & leaders + members thought of women as being in auxiliaries in unions and helping that way, but they didn't think of women as being important industrial workers in their own right. This may be only a partial statement on it, but it

was the way it seemed to me. And the work was terribly monotonous, and I wanted the right to do something somewhat creative, and there was a challenge in this other. And I was paid something- I can't remember whether I was paid $25. a week for that instead of the $18. The stretchers would have gotten (I don't know how much) but they would have gotten at least $25. a week, and the people who marked laundry, this is the highest ~~price~~ paid job. I don't know what they got. Probably something munificent like $30.0 a week. Rae Koblick was one of these.

Q. What did you do at the People's World.
A. I did a combination job. I got the advertising, and I was responsible for the circulation in SanFrancisco... getting subscriptions and renewing the subscriptions, but not for the newsstands. The business manager, being as we were in San Francisco, took the responsibility for news stands.

~~to get~~ V.O. connected while traveling by car 4/47

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Q. Let's see - the last time we were talking about your work at the People's World. Do you have anything more to say about that? I think you probably do.

A. I think I have said that I ~~worked~~ was in charge of both ~~with~~ circulation and ~~with~~ advertising. The advertising was mostly from small merchants who were sympathetic to working people and they put in ads partly to help the paper. But we tried particularly to bring the ads to attention of the readers of the paper so they would get some business. Then, when I went to see them, I discussed different political questions of the day with them ...I would go by street car, get a transfer and go on another street car..We would get ads from different working class organizations when they had a party or a social to raise money. I would go and talk with them...

In the circulation department we worked with district managers. There were about 12 district managers in San Francisco, and each of them would be notified about two months in advance when a subscription was about to expire. They made a personal call on the subscriber and attempted to convince him or her to re-subscribe. They would ask what they enjoyed about the paper, what they didn't understand, was there something they felt was not the best way to handle something. And they undertook to get the renewal right then. You must remember that these were very hard times for working people because they weren't working and it was hard for them to get food. We had discussions ourselves, the district managers and I, and we were convinced that the first thing was food for the body and the second thing was food for the mind, and we could encourage them to do something about their conditions, to make their conditions better. So we didn't require ~~accept~~ full payment. They could pay part down and we could come back and get $1.00 or $2.00 at a time.

Q. May I ask a question now? Were many people afraid of the fact that the People's World was known as a Communist paper?

A. I think there was more fear among the intellectuals... .....among the working people themselves I think there was not so much. We said our paper stood for people's democracy and socialism..so it was not so much a matter of fear as a lack of understanding and that they read the commercial

press and had a bias. We said the People's World was also biased in favor of working people.

Q. How long did you have this job, then?

A. Well, I want to take just a minute and say something about my husband Paul. We are talking about the early part of 1938. For several years he had been working with a fraternal order, the International Workers Order in San Francisco. This order offered life and medical insurance and also offered medical service. He was one of the leaders in San Francisco and the national organization held a training school and chose people from all over the United States to go back to New York city and take, I think it was about three months, a training course. So he went back for that and I continued my work with the People's World. And I got one of his father's sisters to come and live in the apartment we had, partly for company and partly to pay the rent, because there was only my small salary coming in. At the end of three months they wanted him to go to Los Angeles to be the executive secretary of the lodges down there. There were a number of lodges. I think they weren't very wise because people in a city like to have one of their own to be a leader. About the middle of '38 he came home and packed and left. But I had been called to jury duty and so he had to go down ahead of me. The court paid my rent and food because I had to stay behind.....

Q. Did you work for the party or the People's World down in Los Angeles?

A. I hadn't been there very long before they wanted me to be an organizer for one of the congressional districts. I didn't feel too adequate because I didn't know the conditions in the district,..... I continued to work for a year.... I received a small salary, possibly $15. a week, ,,,I think I had the use of a car.

Q. Was the party organized into congressional districts?

A. I think the party was not organized in general in congressional districts, but the largest number of party members in the State of California were in the Los Angeles area and they could be organized in that fashion. So this related much more to election work and so on, so we had people organized in this way. I think at that time there were also shop branches in industrial sections, but it was not like the others based on community territory.

There was also a professional section, writers, artists, and some in the movie industry and these had a professional section ~~which was also~~.. with its own organizer

Q. What did you do as an organizer for the congressional ~~section~~ district?

A. In the first place we had discussions in our congressional executive committee on the most important political questions of the day.... We had discussions on the danger to the whole world of the expansions of fascism to Czechoslovokia..(1939). I personally was very fearful that fascism might start another world war. It meant you worked harder because you saw the great danger and you saw that the ruling class was going to cooperate with the fascists in Germany. We discussed these things and then we had a meeting of the organizers..one of the most important things was that our members should understand what was happening in our country and other countries in the whole world because then we would be able to interest other people in communism, but particularly in any organization in which we were working, whether it was a trade union or a fraternal club, a women's organization, etc., we would help the people in these organizations understand the relationship with what they were trying to accomplish (the purpose of their organization) ...then of course we had campaigns to get additional subscribers to the People's World. We didn't charge enough for a subscription considering we couldn't get the large advertisters which every commercial paper had. It seems to me ~~we~~ every year we had to raise about $60,000. In the first place as communists we were asked to give a day's pay. Then we asked working people who were sympathetic if they would also give a days pay. We had something we called "socialist competition". This meant that one person would challenge another one to get more subscriptions and help the paper. The reason it was called "socialist" was because no matter which one of the people won getting the work done was what you did together. And we also had competition between clubs and between congressional districts, and it really made the work easier. Now all sales organizations do this. The only difference here was nobody was making money. We were working harder because it was a means of getting more done for a common goal.

Q. I was reading Al Richmond's book. He indicated that the People's World actually was not a Communist paper. Can you explain that to me, how it wasn't purely a communist paper?

A. The Daily People's World was not an organ of the communist party, but the Daily Worker in New York City was. It was the official organ, as I understand it, of the Communist Party of the United States. I mentioned that I had gotten subscriptions for an earlier paper. That was the Western Worker. The Western Worker supported the Longshoremen in their strike (1934), and a number of issues were printed for them to use on the waterfront because they didn't have the money to get out information to their own members or the public. So the People's World was started by the organizing effort of the communist party with tremendous support from the Longshore Union and people in many other organizations, and a number of Finnish, Jewish + other national Workers Clubs. They all felt that the People's World represented their interests and they helped, and they were very generous in spite of these being really hard times. But from the beginning the staff of the Daily People's World was Marxist. Not everyone, but most of them were members of the communist party. This in general was known. It wasn't a deep secret. But there was a decision that it be published by the Pacific Publishing Company. Perhaps this will give you an idea of the relationship of the communist party to the "People's World"

Q. Was this around the time of the Spanish Civil War?

A. It was in the period of the Spanish Civil War It was something like from 1936 to 1939. A number of our party members and a number of people sympathetic to the party did go from San Francisco and Los Angeles to fight with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. They understood the danger of fascism. I think we even had some party members who didn't understand the significance of what was happening in Spain, where Franco had great help from Hitler & Mussolini. *

Q. Did you help raise money for Spain in any way?

A. We participated. I don't remember specifically, but we did participate in trying to get people to understand..It was 40 years ago and I don't remember specific details..and we supported the work of organizations helping to send the volunteers over + to help the refugees for years after the defeat

Q. How long did you stay in Los Angeles?

A. We stayed two years. But after I was congressional district organizer for a year I asked to be released because it seemed to me that somebody had to be the organizer who had lived in the area and knew more about it. And I became a District Manager for the People's World in Los Angeles. My district reached from almost rural Chavez Ravine to plush downtown offices where I

* The "People's World" was begun in Jan. 38.

knew the people who subscribed were just trying to get information they could use against the working people. During the year I was district manager I was asked to be chairman of the committee to arrange a big meeting for Earl Browder...

Q. Let's go backwards and find out about the League Against War and Fascism because I believe you were a member.

A. Let's do that later.

Q. Then can you tell me a little bit about how you go about organizing a large mass meeting?

A. In the first place you need a committee, a committee of from six to fifteen people, and determine the size of the meeting you want to have. Then you decide who is going to be your speaker, or you have been offered a speaker who is coming through and you decide if you will accept, and how much the expenses are to get the speaker. Then you decide how many people you think you can attract with adequate advertising. Then you undertake to rent a hall - a hall that is most conveniently located that will accomodate the number of people you want to have.* Perhaps you get a hall that is just a little small because it is a much more successful meeting to have the hall crowded than to have some empty seats. Then you confirm your speaker and you confirm your hall. You start to get out publicity which will probably be a flyer + posters either mimeographed or printed. For some mass meetings you get out tickets. If you have a hundred or several hundred people who will sell tickets you are much surer of your attendance bedause everybody who tries to sell a ticket advertises the meeting, whether it is sold or not. Then you have some indication a week before your meeting as to how it is coming. Then as far as you are able you decide on some advertising in the newspapers. In general you can't afford anything in the way of real display advertising in the press. This is one place where the People's World is very useful because if the speaker and the subject is what they consider is usefulin the people's cause then you can have several articles in it. In the commercial press you try your best to get at least one article before the meeting on something the speaker has done or something controversial he or she has said.

* For a communist meeting it is often hard to get a hall - so there is little choice

second side

Well one form of publicity is to have different members of the committee speak to as many different kinds of meetings in the party, yes, but also in any other of those organizations who are

interested in the speaker and the topic, to have them speak and give out flyers. The Committee meets at least once a week to check on the different details, and as you come closer you decide on someone to be in charge of ushers, and you decide on how many ushers you need. You decide on the arrangement of your program, and very often at a mass meeting you can sell pamphlets and books before the meeting formally opens. And perhaps also you can have people who circulate petitions on important questions as the people are gathering. In the program you try to have some cultural aspect, perhaps beginning with community singing, and then maybe you have a skit or have vocal or instrumental solos so you have a cultural aspect to it as well as a political aspect. Usually you have to have several people say something, but you try to make it as short as possible so as to give the main time for the speaker. There are two techniques about taking the collection. One is to take it beforehand so you are sure everybody is there. The second is to take it just before the question period afterwards, because you hope that the speaker has roused the people and encouraged them so that they want to give more. For a mass meeting that is put on by organizations in the workingclass we try to have somebody who is a very good agitational speaker take the collection, and you try to arrange beforehand that there are some people ready to give large gifts, and they can be either individuals or organizations, to generate enthusiasm. So, depending on the size of the meeting, you ask if there is any one or any organization that has $1,000. to contribute. Or if it is a smaller meeting, well you ask for $100. Then you ask for $25. or $10. And besides the ones that have been arranged (and it isn't any secret to the people who are present that there has been some arranged) there are other people who volunteer. And you have the ushers bring this up before the general collection is taken. And if you can you keep adding what it is so you can tell the people what it is. And you finally come down to all of the people who would like to give a dollar. And then you take your general collection which by that time is mostly coins. Of course in 1938 and 1939 it was still a depression, so there were a lot of people where a coin was all they could put in, particularly if there was an admission charge. And usually you have to have an admission charge to try to cover

your expenses, and you use your meeting to try and finance something in the way of a campaign. Now does that kind of give you an idea? Of course you choose a good chairperson.

Q. Yes. thank you.

A. I did mention that you got out leaflets and you gave them to all the organizations you could. You also put them out to important factories and sometimes you gave them out to people on the street corners. Then, if it was a really large mass meeting, you usually had some posters that you could get up in some stores and that you could put up on some posts. Sometimes they were printed but sometimes you had an artist who could make a beautiful silk screen poster. These were much more attractive and if the artist contributed his or her time they cost you less than the printed ones.

Q. I guess we had better get back to the People's World then and why you left Los Angeles.

A. I heard that the People's World in Los Angeles was looking for an advertising manager and I applied. Well they chose someone else who knew Los Angeles much better than I did, and it was probably a very good idea. But at the same time the management committee said they would very much like me to come back and be circulation manager in San Francisco. So Paul had pretty well carried out the work in helping in certain aspects of organization and the people in Los Angeles were well able to carry on, so he was willing to go back to San Francisco although we went back only on the basis that I had a job for $25. a week. I can tell you later about what he did if you want. It was very generous of him because he had to go back to pick up a job in any kind of industry that he possibly could. And most of our married life he had brought in more money than I had toward support of us.

I want to say one personal thing. I had mentioned that I was fearful after Hitler marched into Czechoslovokia, when Chechoslovokia was betrayed by the British and French ruling class, and I really felt that the time had come when any Communist was going to have to be able to move around very quickly; that really we were in danger of fascism in this country, and against Paul's better judgement I insisted that we sell what furniture we had and also a quite beautiful set of blue willoware, and we regretted it the rest of our lives

that we sold this. So we came back to San Francisco. We did not sell our books. We have never sold our books. So we packed them and sent them back by water freight. We came back to San Francisco with no furniture, so we got a furnished apartment in North Beach - the upstairs over the landlady. She had eight cats and the eight cats had eight million fleas so that our place was simply infested with fleas. But at a drugstore I got some liquid with chemicals in it, I presume, so we really cleaned up that place until we didn't have any. The interesting thing was we rather fell in love with North Beach, and in a few months we rented an apartment just down below Coit Tower, a four room railroad apartment, and we boughtssome furniture to furnish that. One item was a studio couch for $20. which we are still using today.

Q. How much rent did you pay?

A. I don't remember how much we paid to the woman with the cats, but we got this apartment at that time for $30.00 without utilities. And because the war came there was a freezing of the rent. We paid $30. a month during the war. Our landlords were very well satisfied with us as renters. When we left San Francisco they let a friend have the apartment at this rate on the basis that we might be coming back. We didn't tell them we would, but we might, and they let her have it because they were satisfied with us as renters. They were Italian people. North Beach at that time was largely Italian working people.

I was happy to come back to the work in the People's World. It was a challenge to me, and it was a chance to work with something which I felt I really understood and to me was very important. To me the working class press is basic to all the work in the party, and I was anxious to help people understand this and make use of it as an instrument in the class struggle and not a charity cause to raise money for now and again, and felt good because you had done your part. So we went on with our district managers working and we had the highest percentage of renewals in the State of California. We usually renewed around 80% of subscriptions which were expiring. And sometimes we got higher than that. We really developed our district managers as people with political understanding and they grew a lot and they were able to make a greater contribution to their party clubs as well as renewing the subscriptions. And along with

renewing the subscriptions they took working class literature to the subscribers during the year, not just at the end of the time. They invited the subscribers to various meetings and they undertook to find which of the subscribers would really become good members of the Communist Party. So the district managers did a very high quality of political work.

Q. Was your party work strictly with the People's World or did you do extra curricular things too?

A. Well, I was a member of a club, and the communist party always has about six campaigns going, some of them for money, some of them educational, and so on. So I took part in that. Actually after I had been circulation manager for about a year the party in San Francisco wanted me to be the organizer of the section of the communist party which was in the North Beach area and some surrounding so I did that and after a year or so I went back to being circulation and advertising manager. San Francisco always bombined the two things so that I spent my days in getting advertising pretty much and around the edges I kept records of what the district managers were doing. But there were other people working in the office who managed the subscriptions. I didn't manage them.

Q. What year are we coming to now?

A. Well, we returned in the late summer of 1940 and for about six years I worked with the People's World as circulation and as advertising manager, and part of the time was released to work as a section organizer full time for the communist party.

Q. What were you doing on December 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

A. I was the circulation manager for the People's World.

Q. We discussed a little bit some of the things that weren't mentioned earlier, and you said you had helped organize a conference for the League Against War and Fascism at an earlier date. Can we go into that now?

A. Yes. Sometime, I think probably in the spring of 1935, the committee that was organizing a conference in San Francisco of the League Against War and Fascism asked me if I would act as the executive secretary of the committee for a month or so before the conference. Of course I had felt strongly in general that war was bad for people of any country. For example in Friends of the Soviet Union the reason Paul became secretary and we both worked for it back in 1931 was it was working for diplomatic

relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and was working to help prevent any war between the two countries which I felt was to the advantage of people in our country as well as an advantage to the people of the Soviet Union. So I was happy to help work to invite people to this conference of the League Aginst War and Fascism. And Hitler had come into power I believe in 1933 in Germany. And in 1934, if I remember correctly, Georgi Dimitroff of Bulgaria had acted as his own counsel and really defeated the Nazi prosecutors in their own courts and won his acquittal on the charge of having cooperated in the firing of the Reichstag. Of course they intended still to kill him, but the Soviet Union offered him citizenship and in that way saved his life. And in 1935, from that time on, and afterwards, he spoke about the need of people to cooperate together to prevent fascism in every country and from spreading all over the world. So it seemed to me that such a conference was very important. I left our home in Richmond and came over to San Francisco and for a month or so moved in to a hotel so I could spend all of my time helping with the many details of sending out invitations or calls to individuals and organizations, and to making the arrangements for a place to meet, and the speakers and the workshops and all of the details that go into a conference. And we had a good attendance and besides the workshops and so forth we had one, I think, big evening meeting and 1000 to 1500 people came out. And I think the conference itself was something like 200 to 300 people who came as individuals and others came from organizations, from trade unions, from cultural organizations and from any organization of the people, whether it was professional or working class, who realized that fascism was a great danger to them. It was a part of what was developing on a world wide scale as part of a united front of people who had many different interests but were agreed on the matter that both war and fascism were a great danger to them, and saw that war and fascism were very intimiately connected, And that one of the first means of any repressive government, fascist government, was to try to lead their people into war so as to get territory from other countries and so as to have a club over the head of their own people at home.

Q. What were the workshops about?

A. For one thing, workshops on the fact that the trade unions

were destroyed and the working people under fascism no longer had the right to organize and bargain. If there was any kind of an organization it was an organization which the fascist state set up which was really a tool of the employers, although even in fascist countries the workers did manage to use these organizations a little bit to bring up grievances and try to change conditions.

Then, for example as I remember, there was one on the matter of culture. So what did the fascists do first? One of the first things was to burn all manner of books. And this is something that was the concern of all people. Certain professional people understood the dangers of it more than others. If it was like an International Workers Order group that maybe had certain clubhouses or so on, under fascism these were simply taken over by the state and used for whatever program they had. But the property of these organizations was confiscated.

Then the matter of women's organizations, the matter of the position of women was further downgraded under the fascists, and they were useful in industry. Butthey were also encouraged to have larger and larger families to provide cannon fodder.

This gives a little idea of the type of discussions that were carried on to show how fascism influenced the purposes and aims of different sections of the population.

Q. What was this League Against War and Fascism? Did it continue to function after this conference?

A. Yes. I think that there were organizations in different cities and counties which carried on educational work.

This was not my main organizational work after the conference, but I always helped when I could.

Q. OK. I think that covers that. Let's stop for a minute. This is an all encompassing question, but what did you do during the course of the war?

A. I continued in my work with the People's World. My husband, who had worked as a dishwasher and then become a cook so that I could work with the People's World, was not drafted. because there were so many young unmarried men in North Beach..so he was not drafted into the war. He went into the shipyards and began at the bottom as a shipfitter. I think it was called a trainee. Then he went up through several different catagories to become a leaderman or a foreman on a particular shift.

One interesting incident took place there. Negroes had come up from the South to work in the shipyards, and white people had come up from the South. And Paul was coming off the ship one late afternoon and here was a white woman with a sheet of steel ready to bang it down on a Negro woman's head. Well, he dissuaded her, and the interesting thing was in the course of six months workers, both men and women, were able to say, "well, you don't have to look the Negroes, but you can work with them." And that is why we think it is good for all people to work together and get to know each other. You don't necessarily have to like each other but you see that you can get along.

For my part, besides personally buying liberty bonds, I worked hard educationally speaking and putting out leaflets to help people understand the great need to open the second front because the greatest weight of Hitler's forces were pounding down on the Soviet Union, and in order to win the war for all of us we needed to draw some of those off to another front. Also I worked with a very fine Negro woman, Jane Gray, to try to get housing for the Negro war workers who had come in from the South and who were living several families together in one family apartments. And we had committees that went up to see the mayor. And I talked with the chairman of the communist party in San Francisco and got some suggestions from her. But she didn't help me as much as she and others had been able to help back in the 30's. Later I realized that Earl Browder who was then national secretary, that his ideas which we termed "revisionism" were really a matter of cooperating with the employers and not carrying forward a real struggle of the workers for their conditions. For example the clugs in different industries were discontinued. So where we had been able to think up a way to work on everyting it became harder to find a way. And I think we didn't get the housing for Negro war workers. In thinking over it later I feel that we didn't go to the Negro workers enough themselves and try to get them to have committees and try to go with them to the unions. They had to join in order to work there and we should have tried to get these unions to press for housing for Black war workers. The only thing that was achieved was that the Federal Bureau of Intelligence wrote into its dossier that it was one of the things that I had worked for. But Jane Gray and I did organize a

concert in one of the Negro churches attended by about 2000 people to hear Paul Robeson.

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Q. Can you tell me a little bit about the concert?

A. Yes. We had the privilege of meeting Paul Roveson, and of course the privilege of hearing his magnificent voice and feeling his great warmth..for working people altogether, but especially for his own people, the Negro people. I can't remember what the money was for. Of course a certain amount went for his expenses, his accompaniest and one thing and another. And I feel that this was after he had come out and spoken in a friendly fashion about the Soviet Union. I can't remember whether that had been after the war. It seemed to me that he had been blacklisted. But of course ~~we~~ were allies. But there were elements in our country who still bitterly opposed the Soviet Union. I think that the money in general went for a cause. Maybe it will come back to me, but I don't remember now what it was. We felt it was a great honor to have him come to the Fillmore district where most of the Negro people lived. So we were happy to work together with a committee to put on the concert. I think I said about 2000 people came.

I think we should perhaps comment a little bit on why my husband always went regularly to ~~any~~ the meetings of any organization to which he belonged. Attendance at union meetings was quite small and the trade unions had a great opportunity if they had used it to educate many people as to the need for union organization ~~during~~ in this time of great employment during the war which really finally pulled us out of the great unemployment of the depression. Yet the leadership was so little interested in organization that they did not make use of this opportunity. So rather than coming to understand the need for union organization many of the workers, both black and white, simply felt they were having part of their wages taken away from them.

And I think our party also made some mistakes because we saw the anti fascist aspect of the war as being so important that we overlooked the fact that there were certain real materialist aspects to the war. So we did our best to keep workers from going out on strike so as to help win the war. But I think we didn't do enough to help them find other methods to settle their very real grievances because the employers were still taking advantage of the workers to make more money in every

way that they could. And the fact that we did not have shop groups made this all the harder to do. And I think this was part of the revisionism or opportunism which Browder helped to bring in to the party. I remember we had a discussion just at the beginning of the war on some proposals of Browder's and in general in our club we accepted them. But one of the men who was a longshoreman didn't, and the other people almost outlawed him. But he volunteered to fight in the war and we insisted that he should be given a send off as he was going to help defend our country and the world against the fascists.

Q. You mentioned that the chairman of the communist party wasn't able to help you as much as you would have liked. Who was the chairman of the Communist party then?

A. Well, this was Oleta O'Connor Yates. I don't feel that it was a personal difficulty of hers. I think it was a political difficulty of the organization. I think she was a very talented organizer. She had a deep political understanding,and combined devotion and ability, and really a great deal of personal charm. She ran for supervisor, I think it was twice and received a very large vote,not just in spite of being our chairman, but partly because of that, and partly because her family was an old Irish family in San Francisco and people appreciated this.

Q. Was it about this time you decided to have a child?

A. Well. We had used birth control methods earlier because just after we were married we were students and working in New York City to get our masters degree. After that we were two years in the Soviet Unionand living under crowded conditions it didn't seem very good to have a child, although one of the doctors told me that I was rather ~~xxxxxxx~~ nervous. And he said that probably the best and most normal thing to do was to have a child. But I guess about the time the war started or a little before we were working with a doctor, Dr. Frances Foster, who was the wife of George Anderson, a lawyer, who we knew before. And we tried different methods with her including insemination of the semen artificially into the womb to see if we could start a family and it didn't seem to help. So in 1943 we requested threemonths off to go to Yosemite and camp. And some people felt that if I went horseback riding that this somehow stimulated the glands, and maybe it would help. So we were given permission to leave our work. And

Paul got leave from the shipyards. He had had pneumonia because it is very cold out in the bay where the shipyards were, and damp. So they felt it was good for him also to have this. While we were up there we took a 16 day hike out of Yosemite Valley. ~~There was~~ We rented a little burro which was very interesting. But it didn't help abd Doctor Foster simply said that there was a lowered fertility on both sides. And we feel that if we had understood as much about nutrition as we do now that we very possibly, quite likely, would have had a child. Also George Anderson offered to help us adopt a child. But the regulations were very strict at that time that if you were adopted the mother must stay at home. She could not work. And I had always preferred to work and then together we managed the necessary things at home. If we had adopted it is quite possible that we then would have had a child of our own. Caring for a child does often stimulate the glands so one conceives. We did earlier-before the war period-we did have a daughter of a friends of ours stayed with us for her first year in high school because where her parents lived it was about thirty miles each way on the bus to school. The only way she stayed was that the woman from the city social service department (they would not give us a permit unless I stayed home) ~~But they~~ did not forbid us to have her stay.

Paul just reminded me that in the years 1938 to 1940 when we were down in Los Angeles we worked with two doctors to ~~xx~~ try to have me conceive and they felt quite sure that they could help and when they heard that we decided to move back to San Francisco they were quite disappointed. So we don't know whether that would have ~~come out~~ worked if we had stayed.

Q. You wanted to say more about the war?

A. Yes. I think we yielded to Browder's idea that the workers could really get along and solve their problems under capitalism, and we really stopped for a period of time undertaking to educate the workers and other people on the need for socialism as the basis for solving the problems in our country like unemployment, the problems of housing, the problems of racial discrimination. And because we yielded to this we did not take advantage of the period of the war to explain how things were working out in the Soviet Union as an example of socialism. It wasn't the easiest example of socialism because they started with a very undeveloped

country. I think this was a serious mistake which cost the people of the United States many more years of capitalist rule and also weakened the position of our party.

Q. What happend when the war was over, after V-J Day? - and V-E Day?

A. Well. I think it was just before the end of the war that the United Nations was organized. And we were living in San Francisco which was the seat of the meeting for that. And we had the great opportunity of seeing and hearing different leaders speak. There was one outstanding speaker who had been a Communist leader in China for many years who came over on the delegation from China. We heard different ones speak. I think we heard one speaker from the Soviet Union. But we did have the feeling that we were in some way apart of a great world organization which helped carry forward what we were interested in. And that was the matter of peace so that the people of the world could use their energies to improve their own living, and that we could hopefully end the threat of fascism with the end of the war. So it was quite an exciting time, I think.

Well, Paul completed his work in the shipyards and came back I guess to be a cook again. And he had always worked with literature and been literature director for San Francisco, and was responsible for a downtown bookstore and one on the waterfront. This work had not been going so well and he hoped that he could help pick it up again. But I think this also reflected the matter that we had gone away from a really Marxist working class position, and it was not possible to resume the work on the level that it had been at the beginning of the war. And then at this time, in 1946, we went to visit some long time friends in Oregon. They were the friends whose daughter had stayed with us when she was a freshman ~~at~~ in high school. And we found that in Oregon there was a great need for teachers. And Paul had tried to teach after we came back from the Soviet Union but evidently the one principal under whom he had taught said something or other about his having been there and it wasn't possible. Our friends said it was a great need and why don't you go down and apply. So we applied, and it was a rather small high school. So we felt it was better that Paul should apply for high school and I should apply for grade school. And

we did apply and we were accepted. And we put in our application the places that we had been, and that we had been in the Soviet Union. And I remember the principal saying "I hope you are not communists." Anyway with money from Paul's folks we bought a little four acre farm with a house on it because there was nothing to rent there. Paul taught social studies and science in the high school, in the Yamhill High School ~~there~~ near at McMinnville, and I taught the fourth grade. ~~The~~ By the second year people were saying that he was the best teacher they had ever had.in the high school, and the parents of the fourth grade youngsters were satisfied too. But the next year was the year when Henry Wallace ran for President on the Independent Progressive Party Slate. Yamhill was only a community of 500 people with 1000 roundabout. So we didn't think we ought to campaign for Henry Wallace there,but we did go to towns in the same county and we did help put out leaflets. We were particularly wanting to support Henry Wallace because of his position for peace. So when it came time for our contracts to be renewed in the third year Paul's was not renewed. And there were no laws to protect teachers, and the Oregon Education Association fulfilled none of the functions of a union. So the high school board didn't even have to have a hearing to let Paul ask why they didn't want him, or anything. But it happened that the grade school board failed to say that they were not going to give me a contract. And the chairman of the board wasn't present. It was a woman and she had instructed the ~~secretary~~ clerk that nothing was done except it was voted on by the board. So the time passed when they could tell me that they were not renewing my contract. So I had the legal right for my contract to be renewed. There was some talk around about my being a communist, but the children had great respect for us, and their parents had, too ~~had~~. Paul had been president of the Parents Teachers Association in his second year. No one of the children ever raised any question with us or tried any name calling as they would have considered it. The grade school board had a hearing for me to try to pursuade me not to take my contract, and the parents had the right to come. A number of parents spoke on my behalf, some of whom I had invited to come, and some whom I had not invited. And my room mother, who helped with parties and on special occasions,

and she and I had never felt very close to each other. But of her own accord she spoke up and said that she felt I had been doing a good job with the children. And one other mother (she and her husband were definitely conservative) spoke. And I simply told the board I felt it was very unfair that they had not given my husband a hearing, and that if we both got teaching jobs somewhere else I would relinquish my contract.

Second side

That otherwise I would go ahead and fulfill it because we had to have some way to live. So we put in applications at different places and one of them was Lebanon. And we went down there together in May and had a talk with the superintendent who was in charge of the hiring for both the high school and grade school. And he wanted Paul to teach strictly science because he wanted to build up the science department. He wanted me to teach the sixth grade in one of the grammer schools because it had youngsters with a good many problems, and I had been hired by the Oregon State College of Education to be a demonstrating teacher the coming summer. So he thought I could manage this sixth grade. We went out for lunch after we had talked with him and I had distress in my stomach and asked the restaurant owner for a little soda which I took, and I think I laid down as we went back home, which was about 90 miles. This was on Saturday, and I was quite miserable for the rest of the afternoon. The next morning we called up a friend who was a nurse and she came over but didn't have any particular suggestions as to what she might think it was. I don't know just why we didn't try to get in touch with a doctor unless it was Sunday and we couldn't go a doctor's office. When I began running a high temperature. That evening I got a great release from the pain in my stomach, but I was sweating and had chills. So early the next morning Paul put me in the car and we went up to Portland and across the river to Vancouver Washington to the Kaiser hospital. We were members of the Kaiser Health Plan. The surgeon there said it was a burst appendix; that they would operate as soon as they could but it had been burst since the night before, so the poison had spread. It was interesting, another doctor examined me first and he was so rough, but when the surgeon came in his fingers were just like a bird's wings.

I think we should go back just a little bit. It had been hard for us to teach knowing that the people in the community were afraid of communists, so there was a strain on us for teaching. Actually it was through the American Legion that information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation came to the school board. It was this information more than the matter than we worked for Henry Wallace. And finally one of the school board members had told Paul that one of the things is that you worked for Henry Wallace. So particularly after Paul's contract was not renewed there was a great strain on us. I suppose that one of the worst things which one falls subject to under the capitalist system if they want to help change it is that you can red-bait yourself. So you get much more frightened than you have any reason to be, and this preys on your constitution. But I feel that this contributed quite a bit to the appendicitis. And the reason our friend didn't have any idea it might be appendicitis was because the appendix had become wrapped around and was at the back of the abdomen instead of its usual position.

Q. How long were you in the hospital?

A. The first ten days they weren't sure whether I was going to make it. Paul came to see me every night after school and held my hand. I didn't recognize him, but I could feel the strength. And after then days my mother came and stayed. They discharged me at the end of thirty days. I insisted that I was going to do the teachmong at Monmouth because I very much wanted to do that. But the professor I had had down there told me, "Now look Violet, just tell them right away you can't because it will take you the whole summer to get enough strength to teach." And we had received word from Lebanon that they did want to give a contract to each of us which we accepted. And I gave up the contract at YamHill . So during the summer Paul's sister and her husband came up and he helped us move our furniture down to Lebanon and we taught there for the year and got along quite well. There were days when I didn't have much energy, but by that time I had a student teacher whom I was training and occasionally the principal let him teach and I stayed home without losing any of my salary. One thing I think in Lebanon, it was the first time that I ever received equal pay for equal experience and equal training. In Yamhill I had received quite a good deal

less than Paul, and in Lebanon I received exactly the same amount...because they did have a schedule in Lebanon that for so much education and so much experience it came out to a certain salary.

One of the teachers there during the year was charged with somethibg which was unbrue and there was no union or anything to help her. So Paul helped her work the matter out with the ~~other teachers.~~ principal and superintendent.

We were very apprehensive as to whether we would get our contracts renewed because we knew that word might come from Yamhill. But we did get our contracts and on the basis of that we gave up the house we had been renting and bought a nice little house on a lot and we were prepared to go on teaching the second year. But in August the superintendent of schools came to us and said, I understand that you are Communists. Is that so, or not? Paul said, "Well, that is not a question you can answer by 'yes' or 'no' because people have such different ideas of what being a communist is." So they discussed it some and he said "Well, here we have it. Violet was circulation manager of the People's World. In 1930 you signed a petition to put the Communist Party on the ballot. You were in the Soviet Union. You did teach English in the Soviet Union." He had hoped that we would say no, we weren't so when he brought these communists when he asked. facts out ~~and then~~ he could discharge us on the basis of having lied to him. He had actually been approached right after the contracts were signed, ~~but~~ right at the end of the school year by a man who was running for the State Senate, and had gotten word through a grade school board member just outside of Lebanonof what had taken place in Yamhill, and the information that the FBI was siphoning through the American Legion. And he had decided that this would be a very good issue to blow up and get attention in getting elected to the State Senate.

Q. Do you remember his name?

A. I don't, but I might be able to find it by looking at clippings from that time. So the superintendent of schools had stood him off for a couple of months. but the man had finally said, "I will harrass you and the principal every day of the school year if you don't let them go. I am willing that they teach in Sunday School, but I am not willing that they teach in public school."

Q. Had you been teaching in sunday school, or was that a figure

of speech?
A. It was ~~was~~ what he had to say to make it humorous he thought. So this was at the beginning of the Korean War and the beginning of the McCarthy period. We went to see a lawyer in Portland whom we knew. He was really a people's lawyer. And we asked him what we could do. And he said if there were not the hysteria of the war I would take you into court and get your whole contract payment. He said now the best thing you can do is to stay the farthest away from the court. He said, "You will just have to negotiate and do the best thing you can because there is nothing that can be done legally at the moment with all the hysteria." So it happened that the teacher whom Paul had helped was the wife of the City Attorney. And the school board chose the city attorney to be their negotiator. He was also a very principled member of the Democratic Party and imbued with the American principles of democracy and fair play. So he read us our dossier from the FBI, part of which I have told you from what the superintendent had to say. And another thing which I had mentioned earlier was that I had worked during the war to try to get housing for the Negro war workers. And that made me just feel sad because we hadn't achieved it. The board wanted us to settle for one fourth of our contract, and we held out for one-third. We made them negotiate for half, but we took a third of it. So the city attorney, we feel, really helped on the matter. But I want to say one thing else. We had been in the community only a year and there was, actually I found out that of the two sixth grades the principal's daughter was in one. So he put all the good students in there so she would have encouragement to study, and he put all the problems in mine because if I was going to be a demonstration teacher he thought I should be able to manage them. It seems as if the children's mouths were just opening and shutting all the time. And one girl in particular who had a very good head, she would not read over the lesson and would talk all the time.. and I told the principal that I would like to invite her mother to come. I guess he had heard that a number of times before. He said OK invite her and I will stand back of you. But he said to be a little careful of what you say. So the mother came and I said, "Now you know Linda is a very bright girl and she

should go on through high school, and there is no reason she shouldn't go on ~~xxx~~ to college, and I think these are the kind of people she would want to associate with, and you would want her to." But I said, "unless she starts to learn to study she is not going to get through high school and she is never going to get to college." And I said, "this is a crucial year for her to start and if you will help with her at home to get her to read the lesson, then I think between us we can make it." Well she did start working with Linda and Linda did start reading her lesson. So I don't know, it must have been the grade school board I guess. I don't know what board really met. Anyway I think we tried to get two or three people to go, but twelve people went to the board and spoke on our behalf, and one of them was Linda's mother, and another one was the Methodist minister.* And I believe somebody went from the Grange. We had been members of the Grange (the Farmers grange). We had been members of the grange for several years since we had been in Yamhill and Paul had been the delegate from the local grange in Lebanon to the State Convention. And they spoke on our behalf. There are several other things which I think testify to the real decency and defense of democratic rights on the part of the people. The independent publisher of the local newspaper [interruption by Paul] the people of Lebanon I should have said. In Yamhill there was one father who was a bricklayer and he really fought with the high school board to get a hearing for Paul. But in Lebanan the independent owner of the local newspaper would not carry any story about us because he said there were no facts to substantiate it. Well, the aspirant to the State Senate did get the County paper in Albany to run and write up a regular story about us. So somebody did come and put some paint on our garage doors. And the superintendent said to Paul, "Everybody in town is calling you a communist."

So we knew a man who was a Watkins dealer, and this was the first company that called on people in their homes. And Paul decided that he would be a Watkins dealer, and he said to me, "I'll find out whether everybody in town is calling me this." Well, actually the Watkins distributor, who was the manager in Salem, had read this story in the Albany paper. But he said,

* Another ~~One of them~~ was a teacher from my school altho the principal had told all of the teachers to have nothing to do with us or our case.

"If the man is as bad as that he won't have the nerve to call house-to-house, so we'll just see." When the would-be senator sent his representatives to the plywood mill before he was elected to talk about all these terrible things about us the men simply brushed them off and said, "Look, back in the thirties a lot of us signed that petition too, and you just go and peddle your wares somewhere else."

I have to tell you one thigg more because I think you shouldn't just tell the bad things or the undemocratic fascist-like things that take place, but you should also show that there is something else on the part of the people, and that was -

Q. Wait a minute. Let us go to the next tape then.

Q. You were going to tell me about the minister at Lebanon or Yamhill?

A. At Lebanon. I think we did refer to him and what he did earlier, and that was that he came and asked us to join his congregation, which we did. I think I should say that the man got elected to the State Senate. Then he came up for re-election. It seems to me that it came up in two years for the State Senate, but I am not positive. Anyway when he came up for re-election he was defeated. Many people felt it was because of what he had done and how he had undertaken to inflate this matter for his own advantage. Also the school board member who had relayed this information to him was defeated when he came up for the grade school board again. I think one of our good friends did special work on that one, but anyway the people understood his role. I want to say just a word about the hysteria. It was so great that nobody seemed willing to do anything about peace or trying to end the Korean war. And I had never experienced a period like this, and I wanted to do something to help get the war ended. And there was one old time socialiast by the name of Harlan Talbert who had decided to run for the United States Senate because it would give him a chance in the campaigning to talk about the injustice of the Korean war and to talk about peace. So Paul and I agreed that I would be an unpaid secretary for him from the time in September. Well, the superintendent came in August. When we finally got it settled we got a third which we used to pay off the contract on our car. We had gotten a new car a year before. I offered to do secretarial work for him until November for free. In that way I was able to help a little bit in exposing to the people the imperialist nature of the war in Korea.

Well, Paul started in September as a Watkins dealer and I in November, and we each called house to house six days a week and in all of that time we found only three people who refused to buy from us for anything ~~that~~ that could be considered a political reason. This just proved that what the superintendent had said was trying to scare us. I will say that it was extremely hard for me to start out with a case in my hand and to meet my students because

I could not help but feel well that it was a lower catagory of work. And I guess there are ones who remember that peddlers had played quite an honorable role since the time of the first American revolution in the people's movement. I think just one more word about democracy. The Watkins company had rural dealers and city dealers. But the rural dealer near us liked to come into the town, so he didn't like the matter that we were the dealers there so it cut him out of some of the selling he had done earlier. So he got the Veterans of Foreign Wars to complain to the manager of the Watkins Company in Salem that we were communists and they didn't think we should be allowed to represent the company. And it was just a little bit pathetic that he also sent a letter. His name was Schaidisky. I think he was of Polish origin. Anyway in April the sales manager from Minnesota was coming out to Portland, and he wanted to meet us. So we went up to see him. And Paul had kept records of what we sold per hour, and the records were quite good. So Paul had these records and we went in to see the sales manager and he said, "Well, we have had complaints that you people are communists, and what would you like to say about that?" And Paul said, "I want to tell you that when I was going to Stanford one of the professors in the engineering department was working for LaFollete, and I helped. And when I was getting my masters degree in New York City I helped the socialists." Then he said, "I signed a petition to put the communist party on the ballot. The reason I did it was necause as I read our history the progress for people's needs has always been made on the basis of programs brought forward by minority parties. When the people began to rally around any of these demands, then they were partially taken over by the big parties." Then Paul went on the say that perhaps he would like to know about our selling record. The sales manager listened. Then he said, "You know it is my opinion that a man's politics and his religion are his own business." And this was in the midst of the McCarthy period because this was in the spring of 1951. And he said, "We really need somebody to go as a manager (only they called it a distributor) in Pasadena." And he would like to have us go down there. And you get paid on the basis of 15% of what the dealers buy from you and you have to get the dealers and train them. We had no way of knowing that Pasadena had a record for I guess five

managers back of not being able to get dealers, and it was very difficult. We knew that the company would be pleased to have us relieve them of any complaints coming in. But particularly Paul's folks were getting old. My mother was already dead and my father had been killed in an accident in 1926 and my mother had died in 1949 about six months after she had come to see me in the hospital. We would be within about 300 miles of his parents, so we thought that maybe it would be worthwhile to go.
Q. You had bought a home in Lebanon. Did you sell it then?
A. Yes. We put it up for sale and we sold it very quickly, and I think we got $1,500; more than we had paid for it. It was somebody coming to work in the plywood mill. So I believe it was on Memorial Day 1951 that we rolled into Pasadena and into the yard of a house which was living quarters and the Watkins store both. It was really only three rooms and the front room was the Watkins store. The middle room was our bedroom and the Watkins products were supposed to go under the bed, and we had a kitchen. The district manager down there thought that was very adequate. Fortunately there was a garage because we had furniture from a five room house, and we stored our furniture in that. We started in to work and we found that it was very difficult to get dealers and that any emergency in the dealer's lives, because you could get only part time dealers, they didn't buy that week. So your expenses went on the same and you didn't have any income except that the company expected that Paul at least would go out and sell to help pay for theliving. And I did it too, but after a few months we rebelled at the living quarters. It was no way to live. So we got a nice five room house with bath just through the block in a court there from the same landlord we were renting this from, and we used the whole thing then as a store, and we both did some Watkins selling. But with our best efforts we really could get very little in the way of dealers. But the company insisted that we get a store and not have this which was just a house. So we increased our expenses and took a store a couple of blocks away. In two years we lost $1200 -(I am sorry I think it was $1600) just a little bit more than we had made on the house. About that the time husband of a friend that we had made came to us. He was an associate professor at Cal Tech. He said the biology room at Cal. Tech. was wanting a new supervisor, and "I think one of you ought to apply." I said Paul was the one. He had graduated in biology

and he really had a feeling for getting something like this in order. So he applied and the person who was interviewing him said, "I don't know why you are applying for this. It is $4000. a year and you could go out and be a principal and get much more money." But he said if you work out well we will give you a small raise sometime along, but he didn't stipulate any particular time. And he asked for the names of Paul's three principals in Oregon, and the only one he could get was the principal at Lebanon with whom Paul had had very little association. He was known to be rather on the conservative side. This man said to the head of the department, "We want you to know that we had a little trouble with the American Legion about Mr. Orr, but we should like to recommend him both as to his character and his work." Well, we were very pleased that the department should know that there was something like this because you can't walk in and say "Maybe you don't want me because of my politics". Nobody else goes in and says that and you can't say it, so this was very good. Paul reorganized the way they did things. [illegible]. The chemistry stockroom was always having explosions, [illegible] and so forth. They didn't have them in biology. Of course chemistry had more dangerous chemicals. With his assistant they serviced two hundred graduate students and professors in the department with about how many items? It seemed to me that it was several thousand items, and he helped the assistant, who was a woman, to learn how to do the work.

In the meantime we brought our letters from the Methodist Church in Lebanon to the First Methodist Church in Pasadena which had about 3000 members. There was a church conference three or four months after we got there down in Riverside and I attended it. I spoke on some matter having to do with education and the young people so they wanted me to teach in the junior high department. So I taught a class in the junior high department, and I think not very long after they wanted me to be in charge of that department. But also there was a World Friendship and Peace Committee in the church, and when the minister called upon us and told us about different things I think he mentioned this and we said we were very much interested in peace. So he told the committee and they invited us to come. Then we became members of the committee and in the course of a year I became the chairman of the committee and we

were able to carry on quite a bit of work within the framework of the Methodist social creed and the national committee on world peace in cooperative with the committee of Justice and Peace of the National Council of Churches. There was a church paper which came out every week and we could have an article in that on different things. Also we attended one of the adult classes, but it was organized as kind of a club in the church, and it was called the Parents Class. And I guess the second year we became the program chairmen for that, and the third year we were the presidents. They always had husband and wife to work together, which I thought was a very nice arrangement for a class of I think about 125 people. Also I became one of the representatives of the church to the Council of churches, and there was a very good department. I am not quite sure what it was called, but it had different committees - one on peace, one on alcoholism, one on legislation. There were six committees altogether, and we met once a month as a group and then divided up into the different committees. And I worked with the peace committee. And we also were in relationship and cooperated with the AmericanFriends Service Committeefor which the southwest regional office was in Pasadena.

We also helped to start a Methodist Peace Council for the five Methodist Churches and then we invited the Negro Methodist Churches also to send representatives, and we almost became a Council for the 40 Methodist Churches in that district, but it would have left out the Negro ones, and we kind of hesitated too long and it didn't go through. We should have had the Methodist Peace Council and then invited them. Anyway that was the way it was. In the Council of Churches we worked out a Peace Opinionnaire. It was a multiple choice and they had a choice, if I remember, of three reactions to a question. And it was designed,the quesionnaire to be educational in itself, but also to get the sentiment. It was carried through very well in our church and in maybe a dozen churches. There were forty churches which cooperated in the Council of Churches. The senior minister of our church was very much impressed with this peace opinionnaire and thought it one of the best things that had been done.

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corrected 12/28/76

Orr: The Minister of the church was K. Morgan Edwards. Anyway, the work continued into 1955, and actually in 1955 we were invited to become members of the Missions Commission in the church. And this was the most powerful committee as far as activities, and they handled thousands of dollars, and it was really a matter of prestige. Well, we had been working pretty hard and we were kind of tired, so we told them that we would like not to accept. In four or five months if they still wished us to, we would. Also the Parents Class, after we had been presidents for one year, they asked us to take the nomination for the second year. But we said no, we wouldn't. We thought it was more democratic to have a change each year as long as there were wo many able people. So we didn't accept that. And I had been chairman of the World Friendship and Peace Committee for three years. And you could only serve on the committee for three years and then you had to be off at least a year. So we ~~worked~~ weren't doing that. And I don't know - about in April Paul got a subpoena delivered at his place of work from the Un-American Activities Committee. This was during the period when the Un-American Activities Committee was going around to the major cities and calling people in, which almost automatically resulted in the loss of their jobs, and then was a terrific intimidation of other people. This probably was the greatest effect. I mean it was a tremendous hardship financially and a hardship psychologically a blow to the people who lost their jobs. But probably the greater effect was on hundreds of thousands of other people who refrained from taking part in anything for the people's cause for fear of losing their jobs. He told the head of his department about it. His name was George Beadle. And actually they gave him a small increase in salary. Cal Tech is notorious for being very tight with their money. You worked there for prestige, then you would go somewhere else

Orr: and get the money. And they gave him a little note saying how good his work was. Well we tried with the people in our club who worked with us very closely to see what we should do. We had been members and active in the American Civil Liberties Union all the time we were in Pasadena, and Paul served on the executive board. So the American Civil Liberties Union's chief lawyer said he would take the case for $500. (Abraham Lincoln Wirin). Well, of course we didn't have $500. Perhaps I should stop for a minute and say that I had been asked to help to teach children who had emotional problems in a private school in Los Angeles. And the parents had been quite satisfied, but I had said that I thought they could not be helped just on an individual basis, but they had to be as part of a class or a group in a school. Well first they had me teach kindergarten in the summer. But then they had given me a job as an assistant teacher. It was the Westlake school in Los Angeles and it was privately owned.

Kendall: Then you didn't continue your Watkins work at all?

Orr: There was this interlude in here. I had missed the teaching of the children very greatly, and so I did this. So for, I think it was the school year of 1954 ~~or 1955~~, they hired me as an assistant teacher, and I was to pay particular attention to and work with the two or three children and work with the teacher and the whole class. Well, they made the agreement with me that I would come to school at the regular time, but that I could leave before school was over because it meant driving ~~twenty~~ forty five minutes ~~on the freeway~~ in rush hour traffic and Paul wasn't satisfied with my driving in that traffic twice a day. He said there was sure to be an accident. And inasmuch as I was getting paid so little they said I didn't have to go to the teachers' meetings. So I started in to work with them. I tell you, this class was something else. They came from rich people, and they talked all the time. I asked for quiet, and they still kept on talking and talking. After a couple of months we worked this out, and they

Orr: gave some attention. But they began putting more and more teaching students on and making me stay later and later. So I told them I would like to resign because I was doing ~~piece~~ peace work and I didn't feel that I had all the time to give them outside of school and to fight the traffic. So I resigned.

But we did buy a house of our own. Let's see. We lived, it must have been in 1953, and I was teaching then. That was the reason I wasn't doing Watkins. What I wanted to say was we were both working which gave us a chance to get a loan on the house. So it was a little earlier than I had first indicated. Then when I stopped with them I really began working with Watkins again.

Now we will go back to the matter that they sent Paul the subpoena, and we tried with different groups to which we belonged to help them to be able to stand the shock of his being called. We had just in the spring of 1955 joined a small hiking club and we sent them a letter about this,* ~~and to different trade union people and people who had worked in~~ the Independent Progressive Party† said that they didn't see that this had anything to do with ~~their~~ our belonging to the hiking club, so they disregarded our letter. And I think we took it up with the American Friends Service Committee and with the people in the Council of Churches. But we didn't really get to take it up and discuss it with the Parents' Class.. But Wirin said you agree with me that you tell them just three things, where you work and where you live. Well, this wasn't telling them anything because they served the subpoena at Cal Tech on his job. So - well there was one thing that we weren't experienced enough to do, and that was to prepare a statement to give to the press. Wirin didn't suggest it and I ~~didn't~~ think he ~~thought~~ did not particularly ~~of~~ consider the press.** Paul was called first, and they pounded on him for two hours; threatened him with contempt of Congress. Why they didn't carry through on that we don't know.*** They insisted on having names over

* some of the Exec. Bd., ~~including the Pres.~~ had worked in ~~the~~

† We think because of revisionism the So. Cal. District leaders - Dorothy Healy + Ben Dobbs did not offer to help us prepare. There was one meeting of all who were called this time, organized by the Anti-Huac Committee but preparing a press statement was not suggested

** Wirin had no idea Paul would be first, + that Paul would be through in 10 minutes

*** Wirin thought Paul subpoena

Orr: of people in the Biology Dept. And later we found out that they particularly wanted to lay a foundation for transferring the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. It was under Cal Tech's supervision and under civilian supervision, and they wanted to transfer it to the army. They hoped to get him to say something that would give them a basis for saying that bacteriological research was being carried on for war by the biology department, therefore it should be a military matter.

Besides that we feel, we know that there were certain Methodists very prominent in the conference, which had about 400 churches, who did not like the peace work which was going on. And Paul always felt that they were trying to get at my work as much as anything else -

[trouble with cassette recording]

6 V.O. corrected while traveling by car 80

Q. After this, what happened?

A. This is what I wanted to tell you. You remember that after he received the subpoena and told the head of the department he got a small increase in salary and a letter commending him for his good work. But inasmuch as he was grilled for two hours, the matter was played up in the press and so on, certain of the financial contributors came to the head of the biology department, and I guess to the head of Cal. Tech., and said we will not continue giving money if you have a communist in charge of the stockroom for the biology department. So the Cal. Tech. administration told him that if you will say that you are not a communist, we like your work and you can go on being the head of this. And Paul said, well there is no loyalty oath in Cal. Tech. At that time there was a loyalty oath in public schools, grade and high schools, and universities. But Cal. Tech. was private and it had no loyalty oath that you had to sign that you were not a member of the communist party, or ever had been. So Paul said "there is no loyalty oath in Cal. Tech. I am not the person who would be the one to start it, and I think that you cannot judge a person on the basis of their politics. You have to judge a person on the basis of their work and of their life in the community." I didn't mention that the students at Cal. Tech., on their own initiative, and some of the professors who had cooperated too, took up a collection to help us pay the $500. fee to Wirin. And we sent out a letter to the people with whom we had worked in the various organizations in Pasadena, many of them church people, and they sent us donations, $5., $10, $15. to help so that our friends really paid this fee which we had no money to meet. The students also initiated a petition to keep him, and I think it got several hundred signatures that were given to the administration. But it stood that if he would not help to introduce a loyalty oath by taking one himself that he was fired. At this time the incident took place which I mentioned earlier. It was that one of the Quakers or the Society of Friends who was active both in the American Friends Service Committee said that he knew of his own knowledge that we were members. He said this to the rest of the Quakers. He wasn't saying it to the community at large - because he had attended a meeting which was a communist meeting. We knew that the meeting he was referring to was one

of the membership meetings of the Friends of the Soviet Union. But we never said anything about it. We let the matter rest. And the people in the American Friends Service Committee, some of them were most helpful and gave us moral support in this time.* As I said, if we had been more experienced we would have had a statement ready for the L.A. press right after he came out from the hearing. I think we did send a letter to the Pasadena press on the matter and stating also that we felt it was one's - how one worked and one's life in the community that should be the determining factor. Now we had just $400. when Paul was fired, and I had done some work with Watkins, and we decided that we both would really work full time as Watkins dealers.

However there is another matter that I think should be mentioned here and that means - do you want to ask a question about it, or do you want me just to go on?

Q. I think you should go on into the further matter, then we can finish up a few things.

A. You will remember that when we were juniors in college we joined the youth group of the Fellowship of Reconciliation which was a pacifist organization mainly made up of people from the major church denominations. So, because of the peace work that I in particular was doing in Pasadena and through the Methodist Peace Council, one of the Ministers who helped us mostly was a very active member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. When they had a national conference in Detroit he took up with* the Methodist Conference ~~Board~~ for Southern California, which also included Arizona, the matter that he would like to see me go as a participant. You weren't really a delegate because there weren't any decisions made. It was not a convention. So I did go with several other people from the Methodist churches, particularly in the L.A. area, and attended this, which was held in the church of Dr. Henry Hitt Crane in Detroit. Well this was a very interesting conference, and it was interesting to hear one of the people who came from Europe repeat what we had heard earlier, and that was that there was a growing number of people in Europe who belonged to one or another church as their religious affiliation, but in their politics they belonged to the communist party. It was the first time that many people there had heard anything like this because they tended to associate communism with the anti-Christ.

* A woman, one of the Friends (a staff member of the AFSC) with whom Violet had worked on the Peace Committee (of the Human Relations Dept.) of the Pasadena Council of Churches, asked us to join the Friends + said many in Europe were Friends + communists. But we did not as we believed struggles for world liberation were just wars, while they were committed to non-violence

* the Social ~~Action~~ Study + Action Board of

Q. This was before Paul's hearing.
A. That's right. This entered into it, and I just didn't know where to pick it up. I think this probably was in December of 1954. I guess one reason that they thought I would be good to go was because I could leave a little earlier than this. When Eisenhower was president, a number of loaded troopships ~~that~~ were in the Pacific, and the question was whether to send them troops into Indochina. And we were very concerned about it and we got in touch with the Board of Social Study and Action and they passed a resolution which was sent to the President urging that the troopships and the men be brought back so that we would not enter into the war in Indochina. And the fact that numbers of resolutions like this did come from different church bodies, many people felt were one reason which prevented these troops being sent to Indochina at that time., so we hoped prevented our activie participation. I think this was one reason they wanted me to go to the conference. Well, I got acquainted with different ones of the ministers and laymen, but particularly the ministers, and one of the women from Santa Monica who were on the conference Board, and they asked me to become a half-time secretary for the Board. And the minister who had proposed my going asked his church, and they offered the Board the use of a Sunday school classroom in their church at very low rent, and the use of their mimeograph machine, so that we were able to take up various issues which the board had discussed and taken some action on themselves - we were able to take it up with the Social Action Committees in the different churches. This is one of the things that this prominent member of the Methodist church, we think was one of the reasons that he pushed for Paul's being called before the Unamerican Activities Committee. Well, we told the members of the Board that Paul had been subpoened, and they asked people to go to the hearings and sent out a letter on the matter. But when there was all the publicity in the newspapers and so forth the Bishop of the Conference, Bishop Fitzgerald Kennedy, who had been told by someone over a period of several months before that this person was convinced that we were active members of the Communist party, and he had asked one of the ministers on the board to watch and see what kind of activities I carried on. And He said, "either she can say that she is not a member, or you will have to let her go". I wanted to have a chance to talk with the Bishop, but when this took place it was just at the time of the annual conference and it

seemed impossible to get even fifteen minutes with him.
Q. If you had talked to him would you have told him you were a member of the Communist Party?
A. I think not because the thing that I would have told him was that my politics was my own business. And I would tell him, as we told our minister, that he didn't ask the other members of his congregation were they members of the democratic party or were they members of the Republican party, and that what his concern as a bishop had to be was I carrying out the decisions of the annual conference in this field, and was I carrying out the general policy of the General Conference of the Methodist church, which met once in four years, and set the policy for the Board of Social Study and Action on a world scale, not just on a scale here. And they had to decide whether I was doing that or whether I was doing something else; and that they had no right to enquire into my political beliefs, but they did have the right to decide whether my actions were in line with the policies of the Methodist church.
Q. Do you think this might have been an evasive answer?
A. In a sense. But I think you have to remember that there were still laws on the books that you could be arrested simply for being a member. If you yourself said you were a member, then you made yourself liable to arrest. And it wasn't so much the matter of going to prison, but the matter was that you still wanted to have a chance to work with people and help do things to change..You must know that this was at the height of the McCarthy period. You wanted to help change this matter.

Now I think I want to say just a word about the minister of the church. I think he felt like many of the members of the church, particularly the members of the Parents class, not so much that we had fooled them, but that they had somehow not been smart enough to pick this up. They thought we were people who were doing something that they felt needed to be done, and so they felt very uneasy within themselves. And the Parents class voted us out as members. The minister said that he would see to it that we had no longer any chance for leadership in the church. And about the only thing we could do was that I was still a representative of the church to the Pasadena Council of Churches,* and he was very disturbed that we had ever been asked to serve

* which he saw was immediately terminated

on the Missions Commission, but we had already told him that we said we would not at this time. And he carried it out. We did not even have a chance, not only to have leadership, but to participate in any committees in the church. And we continued attending, and we continued having our membership. We did cut down our contribution because he had talked to the head of the department at Cal. Tech. who had come to him. And he maintained that in his opinion we were members, and we think he contributed to Paul's losing his job, and we had very little money to make a living on and to go on paying on our house.

But there is another question I would like to take up. I think that it would have been better at this time not to have perhaps sent it to the Bishop directly, but to have let it be known to our friends and associates that we were members and to let them judge whether the kind of work which we did was work which they thought was good and help them to overcome the hysteria which had been developed. Now the people with whom we had worked, and I had worked very actively in the NAACP, and helped with the membership campaigns and other things, many of them had an idea that we might be. But I believe that we would have made more of a contribution in Pasadena and had a greater chance ourselves to raise the matter of how socialism would be a foundation for doing things. It would not solve the problems we had, but it would give a much stronger foundation for working out full employment, for working out equal opportunity in housing, for working out equal opportunities for Negro people, Mexican-Americans. And at that time we were contributing some to organizations which were working for rights for American-Indians, but they hadn't come into the same prominance. I feel that we were right in what we said, but that we should have gone ahead on the basis of what this man from the Friends said about us and said "Yes, we are, and this is why". And I want to say why we didn't, and that is because it was not a fear of the government. We knew the government knew what we were and what we were doing and was harrassing us through the FBI and making us lose jobs, but it was the fear of being isolated from people and not having a chance to work on some of these programs. In this I think we were right. In this I think we did not get the help from the members and leadership of our party because we had really gotten deep into the swamp of

believing that all the problems could be solved under capitalism, of not recognizing that there is a real class struggle and that this helps to make the motion and the progress in our society. The swamp was the swamp of reformism.
Q. Can you briefly tell me what you have been doing since then. Have you continued working with the Watkins Products?
A. Yes we did continue. Some other people went back to teaching school, but we figured it would probably be a one year stand and this is something that nobody can take because you have to work so hard the first year that you need some of the momentum to carry on afterwards and the Watkins Company had given us a chance to work without regard to our politics. They did it to make money for themselves, but there was still an element of fair play in what I told you about the city sales manager. And we chose an area where there were more Black people, although at that time it was the term which people preferred themselves was Negro, and in a few years it became Black, because they understood the value of the Watkins products, and bought quite easily. But it was harder to make the collections. And due to the help of the then Watkins manager or distributor we were able to give credit and to collect once in two weeks, or once in a month from them. So we worked it out. First we worked six days a week, and decided a dertain minimum we needed to live on, and we worked it down until, when we retired when we were about (let me see, just a minute) 68 we were only working a couple of days a month. At that time we already had the supplement of our small social security.

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Q. Over the course of the years you have been a consistent party member while other people have dropped by the wayside over the Hungarian situation, over various inner party fights - why did you continue to stay in? - even though I think you disagreed at some points.

A. I guess the ~~thing~~ reason I stayed (+we) was that we had a vision of what socialism could be for the people of our country, and it was the only thing we could see that could give a basis for overcoming the great discrimination against different national groups, particularly black and bfown, against women, really against our youth, a so much larger percentage of them being unemployed, and even more the black youth, And I think that as we studied conditions around the world we saw that in any country where they really began to solve the needs of the broad masses of the people in their country they did it on the basis of socialism. That is the ownership of the natural resources and of the factories, the productive resources of the country in the hands of the working people. And in every one of the countries where they started to take a socialist path ~~they were farther along~~ (and now about one third of the world at least is moving in that direction) there was a strong communist party. It was not always called that. Sometimes it had joined in some cases with parts of the socialist party. Sometimes it was made up of several different parties, but at least there was a strong communist party which was part of it. So we realized that if we were to have socialism as the basis for solving the problems in which we first became interested in our church life as young people that ~~this~~ a communist party was necessary. Further it was very hard for me to come to accept the fact you worked against capitalism and all of its evils, the multi-national corporations and so forth, on the outside but you had to struggle against these inside of your organization. Pretty well I've come to see that as we come in we do not become socialists, socially minded as we join the party. We only set our faces in that direction. We start to study the science of the working class, Marxism, and we drag in with us all of the evils of capitalism, one of which is a very individualistic way of work. To believe that if anything is done right we have to do it, people have to follow our plans. This is what is known as bureaucracy, of which we have had more than plenty in our time in our organization. Probably we have

told of what some of the leading people were, like who would sit and tell you what you were to do. And in several cases got angry with us when we refused to do certain things, At the same time we understood to carry out decisions that were made by committees and our convention to the best of our ability. I believe you can only carry out a decision as far as you can understand it. But I think you do not work against that decision, but that you do what you can. So the thing is, I think Lenin said that the capitalist system has twisted and distorted the people who live under it and are oppressed by it and really they become not very good material for building a new society and yet, while the capitalists have the money, while the capitalists have a great deal of power to organize, yet the people have the numbers. And when they can come together they have the possibility of really changing basically the political and economic foundation, probably you should say economic and political foundation, of the society so that - Well, I think one thing around the period of 1955, somewhere around that period there were the revelations about Stalin. Many people left around that time, and we were less active for a couple of years. That was the time when the FBI men came down the driveway when Paul was working in the garden, and they assumed that we had left the party. They said, "Do you have something you want to tell us?" Paul shook his head and did not open his mouth. They handed him their card and said, "Well, when you have something to say let us know." And that was the last time they came to us directly. At one time we really did consider whether the thing to do was to leave, but we looked around and there was no other organization which was even trying to work for socialism. And we made up our minds that the thing to do was to go on, improve our organization as best we could from the inside, and it is a continual struggle. And when we have gotten it so that it is an organization in very good shape probably society will have advanced to the place where we won't need it any more.

Q. Well the next question is sort of vague. What was your relationship with your husband through all these years?

A. This month we have been visiting our friends and relatives in California, and have had several different reunions on the matter of our fiftieth wedding anniversary, and have had personal and group visits with 270 relatives and other friends. I think that ours was a good cooperative relationship. And I mentioned

in the beginning he asked did I think we could plan our lives together, and we have had real disagreements about different matters and real difficulties financially as to how we were going to divide what little money we had for expenses. But in the first place we really shared the same perspective as to what could be useful for the vast majority of the people of our country, the people who worked for a living, and we wanted to work on this. So the differences that we had were more a matter of differences in method than they were in aim and perspective. Furthermore he was many years in advance of what an increasing number of men are doing now, and that is lifting on the load as far as the household work was concerned. And this gave me the possibility to take part in the larger life of the world. I think that when I said we had decided not to adopt because I couldnIt go out and work it was a matter not of money, but it was a matter that we think a woman should have the right to be a part of the larger life of society and that this will in turn enrich the marriage relationship, and that just being at home with the housework and the children is very stultifying to anybody, man or woman. The men who have tried it usually find it so. Paul always encouraged me in the work I wanted to do. We discussed it together. I have a tendency to get over enthused and over excited. Then after that I get tired. It isn't that I want to quit, but I get kind of discouraged. And he has helped me a great deal in balance, which I appreciate. I think the things I have done are really things we have done together. Our personal relationship has really grown and developed and been enriched through the years and I think that our ffiends feel that we are really a team working on these things together and building our lives. We now have a little seven acre place with a mobile home on it outside of Eugene, Oregon.

Q. This is sortof jumpking around,but - what was the approach of people toward you as a woman within the party.

A. I think this is one of the places where we drag in all of the capitalist approach and ideology. The largest number of men in the party still have a good deal of the attitude of male domination prevalent in our society and which I think is one of the ways in which the ruling class divides the population so they can make more money. They turn the men and the women against each other so that as far as I was concerned I was given

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For example as circulation manager in San Francisco for the People's World, they considered that $25.00 a week was enough. Some of the men who were working and so on, well they got $40.00 a week. We didn't have a union particularly there. And I waged a struggle and just before I asked for a release from the People's World to go up and teach in Yamhill, Oregon I did get $40.00. Now xx I think that one must say that there are exceptions and that there is a growing understanding. And as far as Marxism is concerned it is based firmly on the matter of equal opportunities for all persons and Lenin said that every cook must learn to rule ~~a~~ the state. We could always go to Marx and Lenin for support in carrying on work amongst women, and for one's rights.

Q. What about other people in the course of your work. I mean in the church or in your trade unions, or is that too general a question?

A. Well, let's take up the trade union. It was accepted in the Laundry Workers' contract that better jobs went to the men and they got higher wages, so I think it is the exceptional man that I knew in the laundry workers union where I worked, or in others, who understood that the men themselves could not free themselves from capitalist exploitation until they had the full support and cooperation of the women. Now men are understanding this much more because in the unions where there are rank and file movements, movement of the membership itself for democracy, they are bringing forward the matter of equal pay for equal work for women. So there has been a big change in this matter. For myself I only got equal pay when we taught the one year in Lebanon when it was on the basis of one's schooling and one's experience. There was a schedule and I got the same salary as Paul did. Then, in the Watkins work, everyone got approximately 40% of the retail price of what they sold so that a woman really had an equal opportunity on the basis of the work that ~~they~~ she did. And perhaps a woman had a little advantage because you needed, when you called the first time or two to build up your route, you needed to be invited into the house to show the things you had. And I think it was a little easier for a woman to do this. But Paul never seemed to have any particular difficulty on this score. The first place he ever went in Lebanon he said, "I am your Watkins dealer" and the woman almost dragged him in saying "Watkins liniment saved our prize calf."

Q. As long as we are on this subject, what do you think of the feminist movement today?
A. I think the feminist movement grows out of the very real needs of the women in our country. I'll limit myself particularly to the women in our country. And it refledts the desire to struggle against some of these inequalities. I think that it is given tremendous impetus by the advance of women in the socialist countries on the basis of a really Marxist approach to women and their participation not only in home life, which is encouraged, but in the matter of industry where many women are managers of factories and other institutions. So I think this has had an effect all around the world. In our country I think that the feminists are wrong in taking the men as our enemies and the ones that are making our difficulties. I think that the capitalist class works through the men. And with the ideology of male domination or superiority which they promulgate they use the men to take advantage of us. They encourage the idea that if a man works eight hours a day he should come home and put his feet up and read the paper and have someone get dinner for him even though the woman has also worked eight hours a day. So I like the attitude of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom which was founded some 61 years ago with Jane Addams ofHUll House as one of the main founders. And that is that we cooperate with the men to change these conditions and it will enrich the life of both. Now the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom does not take marxism as their science, but this is the approach of Marxism, and it has come to be understood and accepted being as Marxism is being followed in so much of the world. The League began in 1915. (That was before the Russian revolution.) And they did have this approach to problems. They came to the correct approach. There were probably a number of socialist women at the time. As far as I know Jane Addams was not a member of the Socialist Party. There was no Communist Party then as the Communist parties began mostly in 1919.
Q. We can start out on this question then. What would you say your major contribution or contributions have been in the course of your very active life?
A. I think one contribution is the matter of just living and building a marriage together, because most of our friends

would be highly disappointed if we ever got a divorce. They feel that we have built something that was stable. I think that along with this goes the fact we did not revolve around only in inner party circles. We kept our college friends. We kept our friends in the church. We kept a pretty good relationship with the members of our families although they disagreed with us, most of them rather strongly, on our political approach. So we have had an influence in the matter of just our lives with people in their saying, "well, I don't agree with this, but I still like Paul and Violet". And this means that some seeds were planted. This was true of our neighbors. The FBI used to go to our neighbors and try to get information from them, and we always seemed to be very fortunate in having neighbors who were workers. And they told them that they liked us and that they weren't interested in anything else and kind of sent them on their way. They did harrass one of my brothers by going to his neighbors.

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Q. We are continuing now with what you think were your major contributions.

A. I think the work I did in San Francisco or wherever I lived to strengthen the paper of the people, first the Western Worker, then the People's World, that this is indespensible to strengthening the whole people's movement and helping people to understand the need for socialism, and I think we can only stop to remember that in any country where there is fascism not only party members but democrats risk their lives to get out a paper (probably a little mimeographed sheet) so as to let the people know what is happening to encourage them that they can do something. Well the paper is an instrument for the people organizing themselves in the struggle against the matter of unemployment, against the matter of high prices, against the matter of speed up; against the callousness in not having child care centers for working mothers. In all of these things. So I think that anything that anybody does to strengthen the working-class press is a contribution to solving the problems of our society. I think that I have also made some contributions to the organization of the party, and I am particularly interested in organizational aspects and have gained experience in that. And I have taken the workingclass point of view although it was not the point of view into which I was born or in which I grew up. Then, of course, I have been active in many of what we call mass organizations, organizations of the people directed toward a particular end. I have mentioned the NAACP (National Association for Advancement of Colored People) in which I was active, and in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. I think probably this is in too much detail, but I have taken part in many people's organizations and helped to carry out the program of that organization.

I think that one of my strengths is in writing. I have helped to write numerous leaflets. I have written many letters to the editors of papers which have been published. Then Paul and I together wrote a 340 page book, The World of Tomorrow, in 1963, with a picture of what socialism might be like in our country, which was published in 1968 and is now finishing its second printing, and has helped get the discussion that we wanted to have. I think the kind of over-riding concern of my life

has been the matter of building peace and preventing imperialist war, and I have mentioned various activities in which I have taken part, but there is one which I want to mention very briefly which we have not said anything about here. That is after I was ruled out of activity in the Methodist Church by the minister and the bishop you may rememger there was the missle crisis in Cuba and also the developing danger of our country's being deeply involved in the war in Into-China in Vietnam. At the end of 1962 and the beginning of 1963 I talked with the peace leaders with whom I had worked and ~~meetcxxxx~~ raised the question could we have some place where the leaders of the main/local and national peace groups could get together to discuss their problems, share what they were thinking of doing. And the leaders with whom I spoke said that it had been tried and the organizations would not do it because they had somewhat differing national policies. But two of the leaders, one of whom was a Quaker, another who was a university professor, agreed to be co-chairmen, and we did start a Peace Exchange in which we had in the course of some three years representatives from some fifty organizations.dome together. And the first hour we gave to what was the main problem, in the peace movement. And the second hour each organization could tell what they were doing and ask for support, but there was no decision made to act together except the reception for Dr. Linus Pauling and his wife when he received his second Nobel prize for his peace work. And they all insisted they were going to put on a reception together, and I think some 600 people from the Los Angeles area came together to honor him and his wife. After three years this grew into the Peace Action Council where they worked together. Now, when I mentioned the fifty organizations that participated it was not usually fifty at a time - it was twelve or fifteen. But over the course of three years the people did come together. And this was at a time when the people of our country did not understand the significance of the war in Vietnam and actually at a time when the ruling class tried to catagornize you as a Communist if you did do something on it. So I think I made a real conttribution to the growth of the movement against war and fascism.

Q. You knew a great many women who were leaders in their own way. I would like to ask you about some of them. One of them was Beatrice Kinkead.

A. Well, we had the privilege of taking a class in Marxist

philosophy, which was really the philosophy of dialectical materialism, with her. And I think it helped greatly to deepen our understanding of Marxism and its philosophical basis that everything in the world was united; that what was growing stronger even though it was weak was finally the main force; and that there was such a thing like a greater quantity going into a new quality like when water went into steam, also movements grew and developed and went into a different stage.

As a person I didn't find that she had such a warm personality. But I greatly respected the contribution she made and how she helped us.

Q. Another woman you know who was really world famous was Anna Louise Strong. What did you think of her?

A. In the first place she was very kind to let us stay in her apartment for four months in Moscow when she went down to gather material for a book in the Palmair Mountains. And after that any time she came back from a trip she would invite us over, and we just listened for two or three hours and she would tell us what she was about to write in an article or a book so that we gained first hand information about many things which we never had a chance to see. Anna Louise Strong was really a genius. She was primarily concerned with what she was doing and not with the people around her. Some years later when we were Watkins dealers she was wanting to write a book and she asked us to take three months off and help her with this book. We probably missed a great opportunity, but the Watkins was our small way of making a living and we didn't see that we could give it up. We always read everything she wrote with great interest although we did differ with her interpretation of the Chinese revolution.

Q. You knew her for a great many years then?

A. Yes. There would be periods when we wouldn't see her or talk with her. I don't know how much she wrote in the way of personal letters, but we did not carry on a correspondence.

Q. There is another woman - Louise Todd. Did you work with her at all?

A. Oh Yes, particularly when I was a section organizer because she was one of the leaders in our state party organization. I had a tremendous admiration for her ability to analyze politically

and for a really outstanding organizational ability. There was a time when we had petitions to get the Communist Party on the ballot. The state organizer had her sign petitions which other people had gotten. Perhaps they didn't want to turn their names in. On the basis of that she was sent to the women's penitentiary. I made it a point to visit her there and I had to hitch hike from Techachapi to San Francisco. ~~We~~ I got one or two offers on the way, but managed to ride home safely. And another state organizer wasn't willing for her name to go on the ballot for the state committee after she had been the organizer in Los Angeles. And I fought on the floor of the state convention and her name went on and she got a higher vote than he did. She was not only a great woman. She was one of the great organizers of our party, and I was very sad that she felt at one period that it was necessary for her to leave the party.

Q. You mentioned a Minnie Carson who helped you when you were in the laundry. What about her?

A. Minnie was a fine organizer in the union movement and really understood many of the problems of organizing women in the unions and the importance of work among the ~~industrial~~ women in industry. And she was an organizer in the party too, and I think made a real contribution and was really respected by both men and women in the party.

Q. What union did she belong to?

A. I think it was the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

Q. While we are on this there are a number of questions. I read the transcription of your tape on the laundry workers union. There are a lot of questions that we didn't cover that I didn't ask, and I would like to develop them now if you can do it. Is that OK with you at this point?

A. Yes. That is all right.

Q. Can you tell me about the shops you worked in - one of the curtain shops, for instance, its size, the ventilation, what kind of a place it was to work in, just a picture of where you worked and how you worked, and where it was located.

A. I guess I'll take the last shop where I worked. I would say the curtain laundries were mostly in the Mission district.

They were crowded because after all rent was expensive and people

people were not very expensive as far as the employer was concerned. As I remember, in this shop there was a place where customers would come in at the front, and I suppose it was 12 by 38 feet across, and back of that was the big frame on which the curtains were stretched with heat up from underneath. The frames had ends of wires turned back and these were very hard on your fingers. You had to wear leather finger tips to keep your fingers from getting torn. And it was very hot because they wanted the curtains to dry quickly. Also there was quite a bit of dust in a curtain laundry. As I remember we had no type of fan to remove this dust. At one side (this is when you would come in the door) the frames that stretch the curtain would be on the left hand side and on the right hand side was the place where three pressers stood because after the curtains were stretched then they were pressed to get them finished and they already had steam irons there and the women pressed a foot treadle to turn the steam on. I worked in the front part when I mended curtains and just back of the pressers when I fluted the curtains, and the curtains, after they were stretched, came to me to be fluted, if they had that kind of a ruffled edge. Lace curtains did not have any fluting, but the kitchen curtains and things like that did. Then they went to the pressers and were hung over big racks, and when they were completely dry they were folded. Of course first of all they had to be checked in by the marker. My friend Rae was one of the markers here and that was at the clear back of the shop. And also back there was the big drum in which they were washed, and a man was in charge of that at higher wages than any of the women. The bad thing about all of the three laundries in which I worked was that the floors were cement and very hard on the feet. We did have wooden racks generally, I mean in the place where we had to stand, I remember that I made a special point of getting crepe soled shoes and wearing white wool socks to protect my feet as much as possible. Naturally the employer was primarily interested in speed, and anything that would pass muster as far as this was concerned, so that you always found pressure over you to get more out. The last place I worked

I think that the two bosses didn't press quite so hard as in some other places. It was in the last, the third laundry, those of us who were working to help the women improve their conditions took the position that we should follow the union contract about the lunch period. The women, particularly on the stretchers, took only half an hour because they thought they got home sooner. And in the time we worked together I think we never convinced them of the matter that the hour lunch period was much better for their health, and that they were better off. The union contract called for one hour.

Q. Oh yes. We went into that. What about the sanitary facilities? What about the places to eat? To lay down?

A. You didn't come to a laundry to lie down and nobody was concerned about that. You did have a room with a toilet in it which I think was used in this case by both the men and the women. There were three men and maybe a dozen women who worked there, and it was relatively clean. You just sat down wherever you could to eat your lunch. There wasn't any lunch room provided as I remember, and I could be wrong. I don't remember we had a table we could sit down at, but we might have had. If they did, it was the place where they sorted the dirty curtains when they came in and we wiped it off.

Q. Was this a French curtain laundry?

A. No this was not a French laundry because in general a French laundry was supposed to wash whatever comes in by hand, I think, and not have it done by machine because it is tender. When it came to curtains they had to be tough enought to stand some handling. They often went to pieces. This may have been partly due to the bleach, but it was mainly due to their being exposed to the sun. After a curtain is exposed to the sun a certain length of time the fabric is rotted.

Q. What was the ethnic background of the people you worked with?

A. Well. One of them was German born. I think the people on the stretchers, I don't know. They were kind of a group. They didn't mingle much with the others so I didn't have a chance to know. My friend Rae was Jewish. In the other laundries in which I worked I think many of them were first generation. That is their parents had come from Italy or Poland or something like that and there may have been - I think in all the laundries where

I worked there were not many Jewish women. In this case the two employers were Jewish.

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Q. Was there any ventilation? You said there were no fans.
A. I wouldn't want to say for sure. But you know in San Francieco most of the houses and buildings are built wall to wall. So there may have been some windows in the back. I think there were no windows in the front. There might have been something in the roof which could be opened. I don't want to say for sure because I don't think it's fair being as I can't remember exactly how it was.
Q. There is another question. You worked with a number of women. Do you remember any particular problems they may have had in connection with work, at home?
A. Well, you see. The reason some of them wanted a half hour lunch was that so they could rush off and shop and try to get things to get dinner. But also to get home by the time the children got out of school because I don't remember that there was any extended day care. So they were worried about their children while they were at work and trying to turn over in their minds what they could have for dinner and get home in time so that when their husband came home dinner would be ready for him. So there were all of these pressures on the women. And of course many of them had already some difficulty. They had a little rheumatism, or there was something not quite right with their lungs. And there were women whose husbands were dead, or were separated. And most of them didn't see that there was anything the union could do which could help them solve these problems. They recognized that the union should help them get better wages. And I think that some of them were interested in improving conditions on the job too. But they had an awful lot of problems that came from our whole society pressing on them all the time they were working.
Q. Then let us get to the union. How large was this union you belonged to?
A. As I remember we had some two thousand members. San Francisco, I believe, had a population of about three quarters of a million. So there were a great many laundry workers.
Q. Were there more men than women?

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A.

No. There was a small number of men. I would guess that there were no more than ten percent of the union members who were men.

Q. Were there women officials?

A. As often happens in the unions the secretary is often a woman, but the secretary is barred from speaking or voting on the floor, so they don't play any role except to carry out the things that the men presidents and business agents decide on.

Q. Were these people elected?

A. I think that they were all elected. The president was elected, and the business agent, and I believe that the secretary was elected too. But secretaries often continued over a very long period. It was hard for an ordinary laundry worker to oppose either the business agent or the president. They weren't known and the officials had cultivated certain friends, people who they had helped with little favors, one thing and another, so we did have elections for our officials but it was hard for somebody else to run.

Q. Did any women ever run, or did you put forward any women to run during this period?

A. We may have had a slate, but I think did not run anyone for president or business agent - possibly for business agent. But we did work on several committees and I told you we did have several rank and file women on the by-laws committee.

Q. What about the executive board?

A. The executive board was like twelve members and I think there were two or three women. And I think that one of the women who was active in our rank and file group and was an old timer, I think she may have been on the executive board.

Q. What were the meetings like?

A. I think that we did not have trouble getting a quorum as many unions do. It seems to me we had 45 or 50 people and sometimes as many as 100 people.

Q. Out of 2000?

A. Out of 2000, but there are many unions of that size that have less today than that. And when you consider that the members were largely women, and that they were largely women with families, it was remarkable that there was the interest I think to come and take part. And in general things were pretty cut and dried. But after we got the rank and file group going

something would be raised and somebody would speak to it. And Under new business or good and welfare we would raise something. The meetings got more lively and as I remember this drew some more people to come, particularly people who read the "Shake-Out" and were thinking about some of the problems. You got more of an interest which did not please the president and the business agent. They wanted to run through the forms as quickly as possible and make the decisions themselves.

Q. This little paper you put out, the "Shake-Out", how often did you put it out, and how did you put it together?

A. I think the rank and file group listened to what the women were saying and brought in little incidents that had happened that illustrated problems, and we brought up certain things like provisions in the union contract which were being violated and which, if the women knew about them and brought pressure on the business agents, and the president who also acted as a business agent, we could get better conditions on the basis of the contract we already had. Then I think we reflected certain of the problems that the women had like in the matter of child care, but I can't remember specific instances of this. Did I say that I think the paper came out once a month, and the rank and file group brought in material. Then there were two or three of us who took the responsibility of shaping it up. And somebody had made us a drawing of two women, one at each end of a sheet, shaking it up and down and the boss bouncing up and down in the middle. And this drawing always tickled the women because they had many grievances against the bosses who pushed for speed up .

Q. How did you distribute the paper?

A. All of the rank and file group took some, and I think they gave it personally to some of the women. I think they left them in the rest room if there was one. If it was a larger laundry and they actually had something in the way of a lunch room they left them there. And I think some of our friends, people like Paul, went to the larger laundries and gave it out as the women came out from work. We couldn't go to every laundry in San Francisco. I don't know how many there would have been, a couple of hundred, I think. But there were certain ones of the laundries that particularly worked on sheets and towels, and ones that worked on shirts, so some of our friends helped us with that. And some of our friends helped us with the mimeographing. I think we may

have cut the stencils ourselves.

Q. Now you mentioned this rank and file group. What was it?

A. These were women with whom we had become acquainted in our own places of work or through our activity in the union like working on the by=laws committee and who recognized that both conditions and wages were very poor, and who understood the matter that we needed to do something about it. They were ready to discuss problems and how it could be brought up in the union; how the "Shake Out" could get women thinking about these as well as our listening to the things that the women were already worried about?

Q. Then what was this other group? I'm beating about the bush. Was it a party group?

A. The rank and file group was not a party group but there were several party members who belonged to it and I believe that we got some of the women to join the party to see the need for socialism as well as improve the union. So I think we did have a party group of laundry workers. I think that Minnie Carson met with us sometimes, and we had a two fold purpose. One was to help in all ways the rank and file in the work of improving the union. And the other was to help the women see that the union was a part of what needed to be done but that there had to be changes in our society if we were to solve these problems, and to get them to understand the need for socialism, and to invite them and get them to join in the work of the communist party as well.

Q. Just one more question. This is an overall question. Can you tell me something about the laundry work in San Francisco. How was it divided. Were there separate laundries for laundering certain things? Tell me about the large and the small laundries.

A. Of course the large laundries had several floors and numbers of departments. And the large laundries did both finish work and they had rough dry where you could send the things and you would get them back somewhat damp. They weren't clear dry. They were about so you could iron them, they hadn't been ironed. Of course at that time we didn't have the materials we have now, the drip materials and the wash and wear materials, so that almost everything had to be either - first of all sheets and towels - sheets went through a mangel and this was two big rolls coming together. Towels, then as now, were in a dryer

which revolved around and fluffed them up. Uniforms, and there were separate laundries for uniforms, particularly industrial uniforms, done on a press. Shirts were done partly on a press and partly were finished at that time with an iron. The employers were trying to get fifty finished shirts an hour from a girl, and it was terrific speed up. There were separate laundries, like I worked in a curtain laundry. I mentioned industrial uniforms, uniforms for women who were technicians, white uniforms, they were often done in the general laundries.

Q. Were there special laundries for hotels and restaurants?

A. I think it was both ways. I think there were some that specialized in commercial things, and then I think that some of the bigger laundries which had departments competed to get this. When it came to restaurants, I think they did not have laundries. If it came to hotels, a big hotel might very well have a laundry in the basement. For hospitals, I think almost always they had their own laundries on the premises.

Q. Were these people members of your union?

A. As I remember, they were. You see San Francisco was a pretty well organized city and I think it would not have been possible in a hotel to have a non union laundry. However hospital workers were not well organized and you might very well have had a non-union laundry in a hospital .

Q. What about Chinese laundries. Were they organized? Or were there Chinese laundries at that time?

A. Oh yes. There were Chinese laundries. They were sweatwhops and many of the Chinese who first came to this country, and perhaps even came illegally, worked terribly long hours with absolutely no union conditions. As far as I know there was no concern on the part of the union officials. Now whether the laundry owners paid the officials something (the other laundry owners corrupted the officials in various ways) I wouldn't know. But I don't ever remember that there was any kind of concern about organizing the workers in Chinese laundries.

Q. Well I guess that's all the questions I have about laundries.

A. If there is anything else you think important I'll do my best to remember.

Q. Well. I will ask one more question. Do you feel that this rank and file group helped in any way the conditions of the women

in the laundries?..the women and the men as a matter of fact? And was the rank and file group consisting only of women?

A. As I remember the rank and file group had only women. If it had been possible to continue along with it we might have had some men. However the matter that it was started by women when there was the male domination attitude - it made it difficult. I think that when I stopped to go to work for the "Daily People's World", I think that the rank and file didn't go on too much longer after that. I mean it takes one or two people at least to work very hard on this, and my friend Rae did really more than she could for her strength. But she had a family of I believe four youngsters, and her husband was an artist unemployed or just doing a little work himself. And he expected her to do all the housework. So she didn't really have the possibility to carry on the work when we hadn't as yet developed more people. It would have taken a longer period of time. Now I think we did go on for a little while and I imagine I helped for a little while with it.

I think that the things that we got in the by-laws may have helped in the matter of wage catagories.

Q. What did you get in the by-laws? That is the other question I had written here.

A. One of the things was to fight to keep the democratic set up that we already had in the union because they wanted to change it to give more power just to the executive committee and not bother with the membership; more power to the president and the business agent to make decisions and not having it even come back to the executive committee. These were some of the issues, but I can't remember specific details.

Q. Were you on any other committees beside the by-law committee?

A. Yes. We had - I think we had a big dance once a year and I served once on the committee for this dance; and quite possibly one or two other committees that ran for a short period of time. I don't think I just limited myself to the by-laws committee.

Q. What were some of the other committees? - the Grievance Committee say - or?

A. I think we didn't have anything in the way of shop stewards. I think that may have been one of the things we worked on in the by laws committee to try and get shop stewards. I could be wrong on this, and it could be that the business agent appointed them. I am quite sure we didn't elect. Of course one of the places I

worked was a general laundry where all of the problems in a sense might come up. That was where I ironed curtains and I was off in a corner by myself.

Q.

Ok. I guess that it is on the laundries. I think we can stop this tape and go on in the next one.

(10) V.O. corr 12/28/76 for Lucy 12/20

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(~~tape six~~?)

ORR - 6/12/76 - tape five - page one

Q. You ~~you~~ were going to mention something about your friendship with Nori and your visiting her in the Japanese concentration camps.

A. When I was circulation manager of the People's World in San Francisco one of our very efficient workers in keeping the records for the paper, particularly the subscriptions, and I think really she was in charge of the work of several other women, was Nori. She was Japanese-American. That was Naisei, wasn't it?

Q. What was her last name?

A. I dan't remember her last name. I know her married name now, but she wasn't married at that time. It was a Japanese name and I am sorry I don't remember it. And she was an active member of the Japanese American Citizens League in which her father was a leader. We were very good friends. And then one of the cooks who worked with Paul had married a very attractive Nisei girl. So we knew these two people. Just after Pearl Harbor the Japanese were taken from their homes and had to really sell their homes and farmlands. Agribusiness really moved in on the vegetable crops which the Japanese families had been supplying, and we never had as good carrots after that. And the Japanese were taken into what was essentially concentration camps, so far as I know without torture. They were herded together back of barbed wire fences. This is one of the places where I think we as members and our whole organization failed to see that while it was an anti-fascist war that it had real imperialist aspects to it. We did not object to treating the Japanese-American people in this way. And I think it was on a par with our advising our foreign born members to leave the party; and I think came from the revisionism and class collaboration of Browder, When the government attacked foreign born workers who were members of our organization. Anyway we did not object personally and our organization did not object. It is to the everlasting credit of the American Civil Liberties Union that they did object, and represented these people. We ourselves did go to visit our friends and got anything for them that we could to help them. However, I think we were a little bit ashamed to go and visit them. We were glad to visit them, but we were ashamed. We sensed

a little bit what was wrong, but we didn't clearly think it through because it certainly was an anti-Marxist position.

Q. Who did you visit besides Nori?

A. We visited the wife of this cook who was a friend of Paul's. Her name was Tosh. I can't remember her last name. And we are still very good friends with both Nori and her husband now, and with Tosh. We see Nori about once a year and Tosh is back East so that we correspond with her on the holidays.

Q. Did you ever go see Elaine and Karl?

A. No.

Q. Maybe they were in different camps. What camp was Nori in?

A. I am not positive, but it was near. I am not sure if it was Manzanar that was near San Francisco. Then there was one that was quite a bit farther North I think in California. So I guess we hadn't been particularly in touch with Elaine at that time and of course they had a great many friends to go to see them. I think Tosh had many less friends. Most of their friends were in.

Q. You said you wanted to say something else about certain errors that you felt had been made in the course of your life. I don't know whether you covered them or not. That is why I ask.

A. I think there was one additional error that we made during the course of the anti fascist war. That was because we ~~xxxx~~ accepted Brouder's revisionism that the workers could better their conditions sufficiently under capitalism we did not take the opportunity when we were allies with the people of the Soviet Union to acquaint workers and wider sections of the population with what they were doing and what they were trying to do in the Soviet Union, which could have been a powerful educational instrument as far as helping people see what and how it was possible to improve certain of their conditions under socialism. I believe maybe we mentioned earlier that by 1929 they had done away with unemployment for example. I believe that covers some of the things. Of course I believe we could go on forever, but there should be a stopping place.

Q. The only thing is now.. you do have some other things. You said you had something you wanted to add. So if you think of anything at home or when I send the transcript to you from time to time, you can type out addendums and we can include them.

..not elaborate ones.

A. Paul and I will both try to think on this because as long as we are working on it we would like to have asx clear a picture as possible as to what we did and why we did it, and where we would like to have done differently. But we think it was worth while.

Q. OK. This has been a tough session. OK - thanks a lot.

(11) P.O. 109

Q. Paul has been sitting in on all the tapings and making notes on what might have been missed, so Violet and I have agreed to give Paul the last tape, so Paul will proceed with the notes he has made and comments on them.

Violet - We'll let the man have the last word this time.

Q. OK Paul, Ive' been making a few notes too. I think we should start with your first party meeting.

A. It was rather interesting. It was in the main part of Richmond. We lived up in Point Richmond. It was in a workers home up in the second floor as I remember. I suppose there were six or seven of us, or maybe eight. We proceeded with the meeting. Then one of the comrades came in with an urgent point on the agenda. Either someone had been arrested or there had been an eviction. I just can't remember the actual happening. Anyhow it called for action that night. So the rest of the agenda was forgotten and we drafted a leaflet. As I remember we even got it run off that evening someplace where we had a mimeograph accessible, and as I recall we even distributed some of them that night. But it was my first real experience with a communist cell.

Q. You were going to mention the types of people that were in the cell.

A. As I recall besides the two of us (we had waited until the two of us were ready to join) there was a photographer, there was a young employed fellow in his early twenties. There was an older Finnish woman who lived out in the Point - Point Richmond. Then there was quite a dapper young fellow and his wife. They had two or three children. They were unemployed at that time. That was the main make up of the group although there may have been one or two others that I have temporarily forgotten. That is the composition as I remember it.

Q. I guess the next thing should be your running for supervisor in Richmond.

A. Yes. That was. I think that was agreed upon. This was a non-partisan race of course and different members were put up for different candidates. As I remember Violet ran for the State Assembly, but I am not positive, and I was running for Supervisor.

Q. Oh yes. We have that on tape.

A. And then of course the vigilante raid came in about that same time so we didn't have a chance to put out any literature

or do any speaking as I can recall for that. Yes, when the vote came in, and that was after the arrest of Violet and the trial, and the winning of the case, I got 10% of the vote in the supervisorial district to the chagrin of the incumbent who had been there and had a staunch base in the community, and who considered he should have gotten 100% of the vote.

Q. I don't remember whether we found out what percentage of the vote Violet got. Was it less than yours?

A. I can't recall either. I think she got a pretty decent vote all right. She was better known than I was because her name had appeared in the press during the free speech trial.

Q. The next thing would be, you mentioned your analysis of your house-to-house work..

A. That was one thing that I think was really significant. We did, several of us, really go around and get acquainted with practically everyone in Point Richmond, and as I recall probably much of Richmond itself. And we kept actual records of house to house and the numbers and who worked in the Standard Oil Plant, who worked in the ~~Southern Pacific Shops~~ Santa Fe shops down in the main part of town, who were unemployed, and who were mildly sympathetic, and those who seemingly we had no hope of making an impression on, we made note of that as well. And we created I think quite a group of sympathizers in this way. I found it really a rewarding type of work.

Q. The next thing is you mentioned your consistent work with leaflets and literature.

A. Yes. We have always been interested in literature, whether it was pamphlets or some books (not too expensive books) and leaflets.* We always have (even up to the present day) when we go visiting or go traveling, we always have some with us and we both have been interested in literature as a way of really bringing the working class position to the people wherever we were. I did it in the shipyards. In analyzing each member of our gang (we called it a gang as it was under one foreman) on the Liberty ships we were building, I think it was in shipyard Number Two of the Kaiser plant in Richmond, and I knew the attitude of each member of our gang, and I was able to reach each one of them to a certain degree with material that they had some basic interest in, or could be interested in. I can remember particularly the campaign for starting the first paper.

* Some of our best pamphlets — 16 pages — sold for only a penny each.

..the first workingclass paper on the West Coast. I think it was in 1932. We started a campaign and we had a goal of $5,000.00. And I can remember at the conclusion of that campaign when we had raised the $5,000.00 there was a celebration up in the party office and we were all very jubilant. We had raised the sum of $5,000.00, which was something in the very middle of the depression. The fact is we did start a workingclass weekly paper with $5,000.00 which would be impossible in this day and age.

Q. What about the soup kitchens.

A. Soup kitchens were something that were started in the early thirties. Unfortunately the party didn't participate in that, certainly at first. We felt that we should spend most of our time and energy on making it possible to have jobs so we wouldn't have to have unemployed and to use money that was squandered in various ways. However, as the depression deepened and there was real serious hunger in many cities and areas in the country the attitude of the party changed and I know we did support the soup kitchens and I think even possibly helped set up some.

Q. I am just trying to take things in sequence, but I guess it doesn't matter. What about the - I had asked you earlier about attacks by vigilantes and you had mentioned something about a Friends of the Soviet Union meeting.

A. I think it was the Friends of the Soviet Union. At least it was a meeting of some one of the organizations working in the whole working class movement and it was held in the South of Market I think on Mission Street, or at least on one of the streets connected with Mission. It must have been in 1932, or possibly 1933. And this was up stairs in a meeting hall. It might have been the Unemployed Council had it. I can't recall the subject of it, but it had been announced and we had a fairly good crowd. And then someone in the back reported that there was a gang of ruffians out there that were starting to come up the steps. Immeditely we stopped the meeting and the men put the women up in front of the hall and we started pushing chairs to the top of the stairs so as to make a little barricade against the vigilantes and several of us I guess had chairs in our hands ready to clobber them as best we could if they did come up. Apparently our preparations caused them to desist so we were ready to go on with the meeting.

Q. I have a note down here that says "funeral".

A. Oh yes. One of our comrades whom we had recruited by going house to house with literature was unemployed. He was a poet and had actually published a book of poems which we still have.

Q. Do you feel free to give his name?

A. Yes. It was Kenneth Shute. He lived up on the Point just a couple blocks or so from us and he had ulcers - a serious case of ulcers. He was a serious type - probably worried quite a bit. They worsened and I guess he went to the hospital and he died within a year of the time he had become a member. We organized the funneral and the funeral director in Richmond was very upset and let us go ahead with it, but he was very worried . He didn't know it was a comrade, but he found out, and it would not be an ordinary funeral. There was to be no preacher and it was to be quite different from the average funeral. We weren't even sure he was going to allow it, but but we did go ahead and later he said it was one of the most dignified funerals that had ever been held in his funeral home .

Q. Did you call this a red funeral?

A. It was a red funeral, and I think we had even let him know that it would be.

Q. What was it like?

A. It was very ~~xxxxxxx~~ solemn. we had gotten one wreath. We had gotten it from a Japanese florist in ~~xxx~~ somewhere in the East Bay. And we told him what we wanted - a hammer and sickle on it, and it was one of the most beautiful wreaths, done most artistically. Then as Kenneth was a veteran I presume we had the American flag on the coffin. The two speakers were Corwin Moore and Rudie Lambert. ~~They were both~~ Rudie was a of the 1st World War veterans, ~~and~~ each of them spoke, one from the party and one from the veterans. And it was really carried out in a very dignified way, and all the people that attended it felt that it was one of the most beautiful services for a fallen comrade that they had ever attended, and certainly the funeral director lost all his fears at the conclusion.

Q. What music was played?

A. I am quite sure that there ~~were~~ was none. Yes, there was a solo. Clarence Tobey sang a song - one of the workers songs. Maybe he gave two solos. I just can't recall. But the whole thing was extremely dignified and really fitting in remembrance

* It was a red hammer + sickle on a 5-pointed gold star made of tiny yellow button chrysanthemums. The hammer + sickle were made of red ~~chrysanthemums~~ carnations -

of the life that Kenneth had really lived. He had come to realize the role of the workingclass.

Q. Now there is the question of the regognition of the various holidays.

A. I can recall from our life in the party that the various workers holidays, in pa ticular the First of May, May Day, November 7th, the anniversary of the founding of the first socialist republic, and Lenin's ~~Birthday~~ memorial on January 21st, then International Women's Day on March 8th, And various communities where working class organizations throughout Central California wanted speakers both Violet and Iwent out individually and spoke at these different communities. Of course I should have mentioned Negro History Week, in February we were always active in that particularly in communities where there was a population of minorities. And they were always interesting occasions because they were times when not only party sympathizers, but people who were mildly interested attended. So they were really remembrances.

Also along that line there were the marches up Market Street - on Labor Day when Violet marched with the Laundry Workers. And on various occasions - when Tom Mooney was freed, and before then the demonstrations for this...the McNamara Brothers, and other occasions. There were several times when we marched up Market Street.

Q. Do you remember any times outside of that one time when Violet held the horse where you had any difficulty with the law forces?

A. Well, we were always apprehensive, and I know we always had some of the longshoremen and some of the husky people scattered along so that if there was any problem at least some of the women would be protected. We were always very watchful but that was the only time that I can remember when there was any attempt to break up the marches.

Q. I want to ask you one question. You and Violet were an unusual pair in that you actually worked as a team, both at home and away from home. How did you happen to be one of the rare men in that period of time that did this? Did you discuss it? How did it come about?

A. It is a good question. I guess I should have ~~to~~ done more thinking on that earlier. We learned to work and play together.

from school days on, and to make joint decisions. So that was one way always, if we had some problem. Two people who live together can't help but having problems, seeing things differently whether it is deciding on a route for a trip or how we are going to handle lack of funds, what funds we had - making them go as far as they had to go. But we have really learned through the years to really discuss, particularly when something rankles the other one we discuss it and bring out the different points and decide on a common action, and we both work out a common approach to that particular problem.

Q. Did you have to discuss this common approach to house work. Did you each do your equal share, or did this come about later?

A. When I was a boy part of my chores was to bring in the wood and to help washing the dishes, or drying them. I did more of that until my sister got old enough to do it. We always had our responsibilities and since we married why both of us were working for a living or in some phase of the people's movement so it was necessary to pitch in. So we did. So we organized it so each would do certain phases of our common household tasks. Sometimes we had very little to go on. I can remember that during these Richmond days we lived on $3. to $5. a week for food + utilities My father had a dairy ranch and of course we visited him occasionally, so I can remember we brought home small sacks of alfalfa leaves and that is what we had for tea when comrades came to visit us, And I can remember one comrade in particular was very amused that all we had was alfalfa tea. I remember he was a coffee drinker and we said, "if you want coffee you will have to go down and buy some." Of course in that time too, in the middle of the depression, we had lots of sardines, and I can remember we got these big cans of sardines for just a few cents, and that made up part of our menu.

Q. You had an anecdote you wanted to tell?

A. Yes. One way of reaching people, particularly unemployed, was to hold street meetings, and we participated in a number of street meetings in Richmond and in San Francisco in particular. And one meeting I can remember - down in the Mission somewhere around 8th and Mission as I recall, and Jim Branch was the

chairman of the meeting. I am sure that either Violet or I were speakers at that meeting. Sometimes we had trouble with the police. And I remember this particular time a policeman came up and wanted to break it up. He said, "Don't you know that you have to be ten feet from the curb for your little stand?! So Branch stepped it off and said, "Oh yes, we are not even close to ten feet." So he moved it up closer to the curb. I think it was probably eight feet from the curb at that time because we knew the regulations. So the cop didn't know - he knew that it what it was supposed to be, so he walked off and we went on with our meeting.

Q. Thanks a lot. You timed that very nicely, I must say.

Corrected 3/30/77
V. Orr

Tape One

Ken: I have this whole series of questions here, and I guess we might as well start and fill up all the holes that we left in your previous interviews. The first thing is, when you were a young girl there were a certain series of things that were heppening historically and we would like to know what your parents reactions and thinking were on them and how this affected your thinking. The first was women's suffrage. Did your mother ever talk to you about it?

Orr: I don't remember that the matter of women's suffrage came up in our family discussions. The nearest relationship or - that I had with that was that my father's youngest sister was an active and full time worker in the Anti-Saloon League. Now that was similar to the Women's Christian Temperance Union. I don't know just what the differences were. And she told me much later in her life, "You know, Violet, I thought that I could take just one of the problems in our society and I could help to solve that problem, and the longer I worked with it the more I found that it was tied up with all of the other problems, and that I couldn't solve this or I with other people, that we could not solve this matter of what drunkeness or liquor does to individuals, does to families and the cost to society."So in the later years of her working life she taught high school in a part of Chicago where it was really underprivileged and the boys were considered extremely rough. But she established a rapport with them and she did really quite a remarkable job with these boys. And at that time you weren't hearing much about drop-outs, but my guess is that 75% of the boys in her class would have come under what we now call the drop out.

Ken: Did she also work for women's suffrage?

Orr; I don't know, and you see we got womens suffrage

Orr: in 1920 (Well,Paul says 1916) So you see in 1918 we moved from Eastern Oregon to Palo Alto and I don't remember hearing anything about what was happening on a world scale or national scale really before that. You see we had neither newspapers nor any radio at that time. So we were really cut off. Now, I am sure that some newspapers came by mail, so I presume we got something, but we had nothing like what people have now - news several times a day bringing up all these issues. So I don't know whether she- I think it is very likely that she did. Well, she waa a very devoted and a very militant kind of a person. I think not in any tradition of axes to break down the saloons, but very determined ~~in her opinions~~ and principled, in holding to them and working for them. At the present time I don't remember hearing about her or any other member of my family who worked for women's suffrage. However I think I should mention here what I think I mentioned once before. But my friends kind of laugh at me sometimes, and say "don't you have a petition today that you want us to sign?" And I was thinking that it goes back possibly a little bit to my mother whom I think I told you that when I was a child and my brothers and sisters there were very few kindergartens, even in the bigger communities,

Ken: You did tell me about that.

Orr: And you could get a kindergarten started if you got enough names on a petition, and mother did that each place that she went, and because of father's engineering work we moved about once in every two years for quite a little while.

Paul: Probably the reason for the difference between the Anti Saloon League and the W.C.T.U. was that the W.C.T.U. was pretty strictly at that time, and probably even now, a strictly women's organization, and largely within the churchas whereas the Anti Saloon League I am sure could take in men and waa a broader approach.

Ken: Well, you moved to Palo Alto just about the time the Criminal Syndicalism Act was invoked in California, and the Palmer Raids were taking place mainly on the East Coast, then you were in a community. Did your family have any reaction to that or discuss it at all?

Orr; Not so far as I know. I had become aware of the Criminal Syndicalism Act in the beginning of the 1930's I think, and the main thing that I could tell you about that was that my father was a staunch supporter of the League of Nations which I believe was organized after the first World War, and

Paul: I think you should note too that your father was away during that period as a YMCA Secretary and your mother was not politically active. She had her family, was responsible for it, so your father didn't come back to Palo Alto until what year?

Orr: Well, I think the end of the war.

Ken: As long as we are on the war then, what was your family's attitude toward World War I?

Orr: I think father undertook to volunteer and they wouldn't accept him because of his age. If they had really looked into the matter of how much time he had spent as a mining engineer and surveyor and hiking and walking and so on they might have taken him because he probably was more physically fit than many of the younger men, and tougher. And of course he understood how to do a great many things. But they did not accept him. So he went to work with the YMCA and was stationed in San Diego.

Ken: Was he a pacifist up until this point and then decided to participate in the war. Or what was his attitude toward wars in general prior to World War I?

Orr: I am not in a position to say. I don't remember his saying anything that led me to believe that he was a pacifist. He certainly was much concerned with human values.

Paul: I think he was more interested in the democratic approach, and not so much a pacifist approach because he thought he saw the democratic angle of the war which now we don't really consider so democratic.

Orr: To make the world safe for Democracy was the slogan. And you see Paul was in father's Sunday School class for two or three years (weren't you when you were going to Stanford?) and in that class they undoubtedly discussed some of these things a little more than we discussed them at home.

Ken: That's enough, then on your parents.* Not enough, nothing is every enough. I wanted to get into a little bit some of these feminie questions because they seem to fit in. When I read the transcript all I remember is your mother telling you not to kiss Paul until you had become engaged. When did you learn about sex?

*see p.20a

Orr: I think either when I was twelve or a little bit sooner. My mother explained to me the matter of menstruation, that is at least that there would be a time when there would be some blood and you didn't have to worry about it. It came, and then you wore a pad, and then after a few days it was gone;and I think she undertook to help me not to be frightened. I understand some girls had been very frightened. I mean some things started and they didn't know what it was. Of course we lived on a ranch, and if you live on a ranch you don't have to have somebody tell you about the birds and the bees. I mean it is a natural part of life that you have to have a male animal, or you have to have a rooster with a hen and a male animal with a female one, so that you know about the matter of mating, and you know about the fact that eggs come from the inside of the hen and calves come from the inside of the cow. And I think father talked with me some about sex, but always in a

(cont. on page 120)

Orr: In the matter of my maturing, to learn to solve personal and other problems, mother and I had one special time throughout my high school and college years. After Sunday dinner (whichwas distinguished from the other meatless days by having alittle hamburger sauteed with crumbled white bread) mother and I went up to my room to rest on the bed and have a good talk about the happenings of the week. This gave me a review and an evaluation, and mother an insight into my thoughts and doings. I do not know of any of the other children who had the same opportunity with either mother or father.

But I missed one other family experience which I think could have been very helpful to me. That was the counsel of an extended family. In Oregon I did have some association with father's sisters, Mary, and particularly with Evelyn who taught the one-room school, and to a lesser degree with her husband Ralph. But I was not old enough (8 - 14 years) to discuss much with them. I was conscious of their hard working and deeply religious example.

Grandmother Balcomb probably influenced me the most. She took care of the four of us while father and mother went to the 1915 World's Fair in San Francisco. I admired her calm, capable, and loving way. She was a woman grown strong, but

Orr

resilient, on the early Kansas frontier. She knit a pair of mittens for each of her dozen grandchildren each Christmas. Why I did not learn in knit in our time together, I do not know, but I cannot remember that we ever even tried.

After we moved to Palo Alto in 1918 we seemed to be completely cut off from relatives on both sides. Grandmother Gibbs came to visit mother a few times, but eas openly critical of a tomboy high school girl who whistled in the house. So I made it difficult for mother. I think grandmother Balcomb visited once. But there were no uncles and aunts nor older cousins to emulate, nor with whom to disduss or quarrel.

If we had lived in the same community with Paul's folks they would have probably offered some advice about our going East, or going on to the Soviet Union, the year after father's death. It is possible I should have come home from New York City to help mother support the younger children. She felt deeply hurt that I did not, but never mentioned it to me before or afterwards.

Orr: matter of fact way and never in a dirty or a hush hush manner, so I feel that I rather grew into it. There was one girl that I went to school with, and she wanted me to come and stay overnight with her. Mother didn't want me to go at all, but I did go, and she spent half or three quarters of an hour telling me sex joked whidh I had never heard before and which I didn't understand what she was talking about. And I guess it was my first exposure to it from another point of view. And the reason mother wanted us to move was that girls got married very young, fourteen, fifteen, and mother wanted me to kind of live each period of my life fully. And I think she wasn't against my getting married, but she didn't want me to rush into it and lose part of my girlhood. And mother was very fond of babies and children, but she didn't want me to have them so early that I didn't get to do certain other things first.

Ken: Were you being courted at that time by anybody?

Orr: No. There was anolder Basque sheepherder - not lots older - he was in his twenties. And my aunt was a teacher and she was kind of on the romantic side and in her mind she kind of teamed us up. But I don't remember that he made any overtures and I didn't feel that I was drawn to him. There was one very big, fat boy, I guess about my size, and he was a little soft on me, but I was never interested in him. So, if you want to go into this a little bit,I never went with anybody in high school. Because you see when I came to Palo Alto I was n outsider. We went into that. So it was only when I started to go to college, then I went with different fellows, ~~and so on~~.

Ken: Let's go back a little bit. I am just curious. Were there brassiers at that time?

Orr: At that time, at least in my family, and I think with some others - my family came from a puritan tradition. And my busts were fairly large - not huge as some people's. And it was more a matter of being ashamed of their beigg so large. I really wore something to flatten them down. And actually it is one reason they are lower now because I think it really kind of broke down the muscles which should have supported them. And so I never had a bra so as to make myself more attractive. But I certainly wore something, and I am sure it was a support as well as the other because it was a flattening deal and not one with a build up.

Ken: That's too bad.

Orr: Yes, it is, but - I don't think the other girls were flaunting their breasts at that time. We had a certain period later that if you didn't have them, well you wore a pad or something because this was necessary as part of your feminine atractiveness.

Ken: The other question I wanted to ask is - when you were going with Paul and your mother said you shouldn't kiss until you were engaged, did you ever object to that in any way? - inside yourself - [laughter]

Orr: No. I think I was more fortunate than many people in that I really respected both my father's and my mother's ideas and principles. And even though I have changed my mind about some of them I think that it. - I think if I had been going with somebody else besides Paul who wasn't so patient and was not also from the Puritan tradition that it wouldn't have worked, you see. And also ~~xx~~ we had a number of interests in addition to sex. So that I don't remember that I resisted it or whatever. Well, I might say we had our own little rule that he could, well I guess he could kiss my neck or whatever. But anyway, and

Orr: He didn't come farther than the knee. And so I am sure that we enjoyed the warmth and the stimulation of each other's carresses, but as I say I think the fact that we both came from the same kind of a background, and I guess we weren't either one of us what you would call oversexed. I will not say which one of us might have been more, or whatever. I think that could rest.

Ken: What about your sister. She was younger than you. You said that she asked your advice after you had gotten married and you told her not to adhere to this principle of not kissing until you were engaged, but did she come to you instead of your mother for any information on sexual problems?

Orr: I think that wasn't a principle. You see she was born thirteen years after me on my birthday. We are twins thirteen years apart because she was due about that time, and the day of my birthday my mother took a big long walk. I guess she already was experienced enough to know this would help to start the labor pains. She felt if it was coming about this time, OK it would be interesting to have twins thirteen years apart. So, when we got married we were twenty-two. And that means that she was nine years old. And when we got married, after just three months or so we went to New York City. We lived in New York City two years. We worked in the Soviet Union two years. And when I came back I stayed a few months at home to be with mother and Paul stayed a few months to visit with his folks. But after that we moved to Point Richmond. So she and I never had very much time at home as sisters. And also mother took exception to what she felt were some of the ideas of the Soviet Union. And she insisted that I not discuss those things with either her or my youhger brother. So that my sister did not come to me in general to discuss these. But there was one summer that my younger brother and I drove up to Yosemite

Orr: where mother had gotten her (my sister) a job working for Camp Curry. And the second year she was able to work in the dining room where she got tips. And it was the second year that she was going to U.C., Berkekey. And so we stayed in Yosemite and camped, my brother and I for a week, and we would see her on her off time, and so it was one of these times (she had already been going with the fellow whom she married) - they got married, I don't think she married him. They married each other. And I judge they were already quite interested in each other. So it was during that time that she said to me once, "Well, what do you think about this. Do you - should you really wait until after you get engaged?" And you know what I said, that I imagined that most people would not get engaged under those circumstances. So I imagine that she felt kind of free to kiss you know.

Ken: I see. That's interesting. Let's jump now to the World Peace Conference in Holland to which Paul was a delegate, but you went with Paul. Were you both delegates?

Orr: Well, I think we were. This wasn't like a congress where you were elected by an organization and decisions were taken which were then binding on the organization, you see. So that just as there are many things here in this country which are conferences, and you go and you discuss and you hear speakers, and it's more of an educati nal matter. I think it was in Eerde.

Ken: How did you participate in this conference?

Orr: I think first Paul probably heard about it because he was the student YMCA secretary at New York University in New York City. Do you want to say anything about how you heard about it?

Paul: (unintelligible)

Orr: I think I want to say one thing. I think it would be interesting here to mention the first two Communists whom we met. And Paul as student secretary

Orr: had the responsibility, and I think ~~you~~ he should speak about that. And then I'll tell you there was another Communist at this conference. I think we will just go back to

Paul: As I can recall one of the things we decided to do in the YMCA was to organize a citywide conference on various issues of world, ~~and~~ national, and social import. I was in charge of it, I think, the organizing of it anyhow. We made a very broad invitation to the YMCA where I was working on through the gamut of industrial church groups and to left wing political groups including the Young Communists as I remember.

Orr: Well, I think other people working on the conference said no we won't have a Communist. And Paul said "Well if we are going to have everybody, I think we ought to have everybody. So this was the first, and I think I never met that person as far as I know. Well, here in Eerde there was, I think, a German Communist. There were a number, but it was this one in particular we got acquainted with. Anyway, this was kind of our second exposure to somebody who was actually a member of the Communist Party or the Young Communist League.

Ken: How did you feel about it?

Orr: I think we were interested and wanted to hear what his idea about peace and war and so forth was. I think, however, we said that before we went into the Soviet Union someone had given us an anti-Soviet book, and we were reading that as we travelled ~~in~~to the Soviet Union.

Ken: What did you learn at this peace conference?

Orr: It's not anything funny. I had a flippant answer and I don't think this is the place for it. I was going to say that we learned that the world was round. The thing is this. We learned something about people from other countries, and got what is very hard to get in the United States - a window on the world. We began to see it all. It was one of the first times we saw how much more

Orr: simply people lived, and how much less they ate because what we paid for a place to stay and for food. Well, we had a meal and a thin piece of black bread, and we had a tomato, and I think that some of our lunches were only that. We thought we didn't have very much to eat, but the rest of the people accepted that this was all you ate, you know.. This started us to seeing something different and the fact that in our country we were using so much more of many things than the rest of the world.

Paul:= There is something I would like to say about the conference too. One thing was there was some dispute on the floor or in the council and the German communists took a strong stand against whatever it was, and as a body marched out. I can remember that - seeing them march out away from the conference. Left it. The other thing I can remember, and I don't remember my reaction to that at the time, I guess I was interested in it. But I can't remember either of us protested it or took any part in it. We weren't on the Council or anything. I can remember meeting with one of the delegates from Vienna, a young anarchist. He was a philosophic anarchist, and he was a very fine young chap. And I remember really enjoying his friendship during those few days, at least the times in those few days that I met him and talked with him about anarchism.

Orr: Did we tell you that we cycled into Germany from the Peace Conference or not?

Ken: I think you did. Yes.
Was this about the time you joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom?

Orr: Oh, no. We told you about our joining the youth section of the Fellowship for Reconciliation when we were juniors in college. Do you want me to go on about the Women's International League, or do you want to hold it for later?

Ken: You have been a member of the WIL almost all your life, I think?

Orr: I think not. In the course of the other interviews I have told you that I was the Chairman of the World Friendship and Peace Committee of the First Methodist Church in Pasadena, and that was I guess from the beginning of 1952 to the beginning of 1955.

(second Side of tape)

Orr: I mentioned that I was Chairman of this peace committee in the church, and I also mentioned earlier that we helped to get a Methodist Peace Council in Pasadena, and it included both the Methodist churches in the conference and the Methodist Churches which were Negro and had a different conference or conferences from ours. Well, two of the people who worked in this from one of the other Methodist Churches, and worked very hard in it, one of them was a woman, and there had been a Chapter or a Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Pasadena, and then it had, you know, kind of fallen apart. In 1960, as I remember, she undertook to revive it. And she worked very hard, and we had known her through the Methodist Peace Council, and so I probably had heard of it before. Now, I can't remember. There might have been some conferences where someone came from it, And I looked at their principles and so on and I said well I would be one of the people who would join when you get it going. And so I did join and we had older members who had been in it before, and then we had new members, and then I already told you that shortly after the Cuban missle crisis that I, well we, rather took the leadership in helping to form the Peace Exchange. And I was a delegate from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to that and they, the members, gave me support in what we did and I think that we asked organizations to contribute Ten dollars a year to help with our postage. Nobody got paid for anything, butwe tried to pay for our postage and pay for mimeographing. And they did that, and

Orr: The women had a very good sense of what was democratic, what was just, what was a way to build peace. As you know the Women's International League for Peace and freedom from the beginning has worked for universal disaraament as being the necessary basis for peace. Well, I think I had believed in that for a long time because I think I understood that the more arms you had the more likely you were to use them. And then, of course, when we were in the Soviet Union we seemed to understand more I think of what war did to people in each country, how much it cost them, how much suffering, how much it cost them financially, how much it cost them - really rather than bringing you democracy, it cost you in your democratic rights, because winning of the war came first. So then I continued but the last year or two we were in Pasadena the branch once again kind of had a tendency to fall apart. There were a couple of young women, one who was Latin from South America, and her husband was a professor at Cal Tech, and one who was a young Black woman who was a teacher in high school. They tried their best to keep it going, and a Nisei. And so I worked with them, and we did a few things, the last couple of year we were in Pasadena. Then when we lived in the desert for a few years I kept up my dues but I wasn't active, and they didn't have any newsletter. But one of the women whom Ihad known through the Peace Exchange, who was in the WIL (we often abbreviate it to say it that way) was the editor of the newsletter for the Los Angeles Branch, and I think that when we moved to Oregon, I think she had been sending me a few copies, so I told her I would like to send them the money for postage. So I kept on getting that, and it was very good. And we have our own national monthly magazine. And then I worked to - We moved to Oregon in December of '74, and in the summer of '76 we saw some very good slides on Chile which were taken by the Peace and Justice Committee of the Catholic Diocese of Detroit. So we talked with some of the young people

Orr; we met in Cottage Grove, and in October we had a showing, and we had it in the Catholic school there, of these slides and we did it as members and friends of the WIL.

Ken: What happebed during World War II. Were you a member then?

Orr: No. You see I didn't join until 1960. I think I told you earlier that one of the ministers wanted me to join the Fellowship of Reconciliation. It was strictly a pacifist organization. I think it was about '53, and I considered it seriously. But you see they are completely pacifist and so they don't perhaps go out and tell the people in the colonial countries that they should not use any arms in order to win their freedom. But I didn't feel that I could join any organization that did not believe in the justice of people in colonial countries taking whatever methods they thought were necessary when for three hundred years we had held them down by force of arms. Now, of course, this is a Communist position because we believe that there are just wars like the American Revolution when the people get more from them than they lost. And this is one of the main reasons we didn't join a little later in 1955 the Society of Friends. We were invited to after they were convinced that we were members of the party, but they invited us to join, and they told us that in Europe there were many members of the Society of Friends who took this as their religion and the Communist Party as their politics.

Orr: Ken: OK. Let's jump to Russia now, because there is one question I had that I didn't ask you about Russia and that was, What contacts did you maintin in the United States while you were in Russia?

Orr: I think mainly we wrote to our families and we probably wrote to a few friends, and we had one friend with whom,-I think we mentioned once, that we went through

Orr: Stanford, a friend whom we met, Paul through the YMCA, and we both worked with him in the Cosmopolitan Club, and he had gone back to Japan and had intended to return to this country, but he overstayed his six months, and he became one of the top notch interpreters for the Japanese Navy. So, when we were in the Soviet Union, we ~~brought~~ got a letter from him, so I suppose we had sent maybe some Christmas cards or something to different friends. And he said that after the London Naval Conference they were coming back through the Soviet Union and he would be glad to stop in Moscow and see us. There is a very interesting story along with that. I am not sure you want something, but maybe you do. (stopped tape)

Ken: You said you want to the train to meet him.

Orr: He told us what time the train was supposed to come in. It was not a railroad station where there were gates through which the people passed, but somehow you could go right up to the car. So we looked at one car and we looked at another car to see if he was coming off, and finally we asked somebody about it. And they said, oh he is coming on a later section of the train. And as we turned to leave the station someone tapped us on the shoulder and said, "Would you come in here for a minute please." Well, this was the O.G.P.U., the Secret Police of the Soviet Union. And we were very naive. I mean here were very important diplomats coming through at a time when the Soviet Union was being attacked economically and politically from all sides, and to have had one of these diplomats killed, or even attacked with a bomb or something, would have been very serious for the country was struggling. They were just starting the first five year plan. Anyway, they said, "Why were you so interested in these people?" So we told them why we were interested, and they said "Well, let's see your identification". We had taught individuals and taught in the schools, taught certain clubs and so on. And the second year we were there the people who ~~had~~ worked in some offices, and particularly the staff

Orr: of the Red Army wanted to learn a foreign language. I mean they had a choice of certain onces and English and German were among them, and I don't know the others. And there was a shortage of English teachers. One of our friends heard that they were wanting teachers, and this arrangement was made. They came half an hour earlier than their working day began, and then they got half an hour off of their working day for their class. So four of us, two fellows and Paul and I, we each had a class of four or five people at the highest staff of the Red Army. Now this was before Stalin began to get the awful fear. That was in '35, but this was in the Spring of '30 I think. So we each taught this class. So we had what was called a "pro pusk". We had a permit to go in to the staff offices (which we never thought anything about) to teach them. So we said, well here's our "propusk" and maybe you'd like to call them up and ask them if we are English teachers, and so on.

So they called up and checked and they said "This is all right, and we hope you understand why we were concerned about it." And our friend did come in later and we didn't meet him at the train. But he did find his way to our apartment, and we did have a nice visit. And I suppose, as they should have ~~been~~, they knew that he came to see us ~~and so on.~~ I mean this was a part of their responsibility. But it was a very interesting thing. I want to say one more thing that we probably mentioned - that we went down into Central Asia just before we left in the early summer of 1930. And you were not supposed to go without a special permit. This was actually a hangover from the Czarist times. This had not become a real part of the Soviet Union except just a few years back. And I guess we didn't know that you had to have it. And we travelled with a group of Russians who went on a tour organized by their Department of Education, and stayed in schools, and you had a guide at each place ~~who travelled with you~~. Well- I guess we didn't

Orr: know about getting a pass and nobody ever checked us or anything on it. We are sure that they knew that we went because to look at us nobody could tell but that we were Russian because ~~we~~ they are quite international looking. But as soon as we opened our mouths you knew it was a foreign accent to the Russian we were speaking. I just thought that might be interesting.

Ken: You had friends there from the UnitedStates. Did you ever discuss with them there what was happening at home?

Orr: You mean like the stock market crash? We may have. I don't remember it. You see our interest in social questions, and by this I mean questions of social justice and peace, we had developed in a church situation. So with these two fellows, and one of them in particular, the second year we were there we discussed. Now there are certain things we would like to see. We would like to see an end to racial discrimination; we would like to, well see equality, and what do we think? Do we think the church knows best how to achieve this, or do we think the Communist Party knows best how to achieve this? And I think that the conclusion was pretty much that in the Soviet Union we could see the grappling with the problem, and felt that they could do more about them than what we had so far seen the churches do in our country. I don't remember that we discussed economic questions in our country, but I do remember that our Russian friends said to us, "For heaven's sakes, why do you want to go back now? Don't you know that there has been a stock market crash; that there has been a lot of unemployment", and so on. And, you see, the second year we lived relatively easily. I mean we didn't have to work a full eight hour day to make the expenses for what we wanted, and we could have put in money on a cooperative apartment and in a couple of years we could have had an apartment with a bedroom, a living room, a kitchen and bath that we paid money on and the government loaned a certain amount of money which

Orr: we paid back at two per cent interest, and it is what you say - a lead pipe cinch - that we could easily make the money that we wanted to live on and travel with. Actually we left money in the Soviet Union because they couldn't afford to change for us the money that we got for helping to translate a book on agriculture. We didn't do any of the writing. The book was this way. It was a Russian book and they wanted to translate it into English for the people who were studying English. So we were working with the English part of it along with one of these fellows. And so all the money we got from that book simply stayed there because they had a certain amount that they would change for you into what was called "valuta". And it was very precious to them because they had to have this to buy machinery with.

Ken: How did you practice your Methodist religion in Russia while you were there?

Orr; Well. Our families,of course,had family prayers. They had blessing at the table, and they had family prayers in the evening. So that for us the matter of your religion was partly personal and at home. However I don't think we had very much in the way of family prayers, and I don't know for sure whether we had the blessings. We went to church a few times with our Russian friends, particularly Easter, because Easter is an even bigger holiday than Christmas in the Greek Orthodox Church. And you go to church at midnight and then you go home and you have a feast but what a feast! And one of the things they made with cottage cheese, then adding butter and cream and spices and so on, and it is a very rich thing, but there was all kinds of food. And I can't remember that we ever went to a Baptist church. Now the main demomination of the Protestant demominations we know are the Baptists in Russia. And they were there before the revolution and they have continued after the revolution, and they have continued to gain members.

Paul: You might mention we lived with Julius Hecker who

Paul: was the pastor of the Baptist church in Moscow, so we had talks with him for the two or three weeks we lived in their apartment.

Orr : For the first two or three weeks after we arrived in the Soviet Union. But I think that later he was not able to be the pastor because the pastor had to be a Russian and not someone from another country.

Ken: You said we would talk later about the fact that you maintained your membership in the church at the same time as you were a member of the Communist Party. Can you tell me a little bit about this?

Orr: Yes. I think that we had been members of the church, of the grange, of the Women's International League for peace and freedom, the American Civil Liberties Union, organizations working for organic gardening, and each organization has its own purpose. And as we were members of that organization and got benefits from it we tried to help carry out the purpose of the organization. Almost every people's organization has a better purpose than is usually carried out. Almost every organization has a more democratic constitution than is adhered to. Andso we feel that the church, and particular denominations of the church, - well we think that the Methodists have had a very fine position on peace. We think that the Presbyterians have had an outstanding position as far as racial justice is concerned, and going into the matter of housing and so on. And so we have worked wherever we were members to help carry this out. And I believe also that a person has a right to a church for spiritual and cultural matters, like the music, and they also have the right to a political organization which works for the changes which they think will improve the life of the people in their society in their country. And so it is not required of Communists in the United States or in most of the countries of the world that they not belong to churches. This is their personal privilege. And it is true that in the Soviet Union Communist Party members do not belong, I believe, to any church, but especially the Greek

Orr: Orthodox Church. And that is hard for us to understand in one way and quite simple in another way because we know that in our country the government has various organizations which keep records on their own citizens who have not commited any crimes. We have heard and read about the revelations about the FBI and CIA.*Well, in old Czarist Russia the Parish Priest was the representative of the Czaar's Secret Police, and everything that you said in confessional was immediately known by the Czarist Secret Police. Well, naturally an organization that wanted to change the society and so away with czarism could not be friendly to the Greek Orthodox Church. Besides that, the Greek Orthodox Church wanted these people to remain illiterate and ignorant. So they had this tradition. But people in general are free to belong to churches in the Soviet Union, but not members of the Communist Party. But there are many, or there are churches where steps are taken to make the matter of Communism the Anti-Christ. And people of different denominations, even some Methodists, have subscribed to this point of view. But actually many of the purposes of the church for the good of the people and the purposes of the Communist Party are similar.

Ken: Let me ask this question because I think I've made an error here in confusing membership in the Church with belief in god. Do you still believe in god?

Orr: I think this is like when the Superintendent of schools came to Paul and said, "are you a communist" and Paul answered "well you know there are so many different conceptions of what it is to be a communist that there is no yes and no answer." So what one person believes is god another person doesn't.But I will tell you that I believe that there is ~~a spirit in the Universe,~~ a spiritual force or energy in the Universe. I believe that people can have an individual relationship to this force or energy.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Central Intelligence Agency

We usually call this spiritual but it is also material as it can be photographed * 137

Orr: And I believe that this force, or energy, can not only enrich their lives, but it can help, let us say, in their personal safety. Now this was not my idea of god and religion as I was brought up as a young person. But I have come particularly to believe this, and I suppose the younger people in our society have helped, And so if there is more that you want I can say it. But you see this would be very different from some other people's idea of god. So I think it is not possible to say that you do or you don't because there are so many conceptions that go under that one ~~xxxxx~~ term. **

Ken: For instance, you could not go to church and still believe in god, and you could go to church and not believe in god, couldn't you?

Orr: The point is this. I am sure there are some people that go to church for the music, and as a matter of habit, and have very little spiritual relationship - and for the social contact. And some of the poorer people go because it is a form of insurance. The church helps you if you are out of work. They help you if you have a fire. I don't mean that they deliberately do this, but the church is a group which gives them a material support which is very important. So you see I think the matter of belief in god is used by the reactionaries in our society to try to divide the people and to put certain people beyond the pale, and so I really believe that nobody could say they do or they don't without elaborating what their conception of spiritual forces in our universe are. And no matter how much you elaborate them you probably only approach them slightly. I mean we don't really have it. So I think this is a bit too - well you would have to go too deep and too broad if you are going to answer this.

** Capitalists use belief or non-belief in God as a means to divide people much as they use anti-communism and racism. They like to associate belief in God with support of the capitalist system

Gus Hall pointed out that communists are not fighting god - but capitalism.

* by Kirlian photography. Soviet scientists call it bio plasma, but there are many other names for it.

Corrected 3/20/77 V. Orr

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Rape two - first side

Ken: We want to get into a few of your general activities when you were very young and in the CP - you know, the first years of your activity. One of them was the EPIC*movement. Do you remember any participation in that, or your thinking about it?

Orr: As I remember, we did not participate in it. I think that our State Party felt that it was more important to bring forward the program of the Communist Party. There probably were some discussions, but I don't remember having thought very much or entered into the discussions. And certainly we didn't take any part in the EPIC movement.

Ken: I see. There were three other movements which sprung up in California. One was Technocracy, well that was national, but there was the Townsend Movement and the Ham & Egg movement. Did you participate in them in any way? Or in any activity around them?

Orr: Not so far as I remember.

Ken: You did mention to me that you participate in a gold strike up in Jackson in Northern California, do you remember anything about that?

Orr: This must have been, I think, in the thirties because I think Sam Darcy was still the district organizer, and the miners went on strike up in Jackson, California, in the Mother Lode Country where there were big gold mines. And I cannot remember whether it was a matter primarily of conditions or wages, or both of them together, But they were somewhat isolated, being up there in the mountains. And Sam Darcy felt that they should know and the mine owners should know that the rest of the working people in California were concerned, and so he asked that I go up and speak at a meeting of theirs. I don't know if he thought it was less likely that the owners would use less violent methods against a woman speaker, or that it would be more interesting. I don't know why he asked me to go.

* * End Poverty in California

Orr: And I was rather afraid to go. But I went, I think, as a representatives of the International Labor Defense. And we have a very high regard for that. We had and we do have. And it helped us while I was in Richmond and was arrested. So we felt it was necessary. So I suppose I went up to Sacramento on the bus. And the father of a girl who had stayed with us during her first year in high school was the driver of the buses that went up to Jackson. Whether there were any other drivers, I don't know. But anyway I had the pleasure of going up with him. And I guess he laid over there a while so that I had a chance to come back with him too. So this gave me courage and support. And I went up to the union office, I guess, and spoke with them. And I guess they were going to have a meeting, and they were going to have it upstairs in a hall. And I think I felt pretty uneasy because I felt, you know, when you only had a little stairway it was pretty easy for a bunch of vigilantes to come in on you, or something. And it seems to me that we finally decided to go and have it in the park. This I can't tell for sure. Well there was no violence at that time and what I did was to bring greetings and a pledge of solidarity from, well, other working people in California. And then I went back to Sacramento.

Paul: Didn't you speak from a balcony?

Orr: Well, Paul thinks that perhaps I spoke on a balcony to people standing in the street, and this is possible. I can't remember.

Paul: You told me as we were driving through later. You pointed out, as I remember, a little balcony, where you had spoken.

Orr; It could be. It is not so interesting about me, really, as about the fact that it was a gesture of solidarity or a pledge of solidarity. I think the strike was settled quite soon,and I think the men won some of their demands. So this was porbably one tiny thing that helped.

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Ken: Why didn't you speak as a member of the party?

Orr: I don't know for sure that I did not, but I think that they felt that it was more important for the owners to know that there was an organization that would back up the men if they arrested them or used violence against them, and so on, and I think probably the miners would have welcomed somebody from the party. But it was more useful to them under the circumstances to have a workers' defense organization be represented.

Ken: You were a member of the ILD then?

Orr: Yes. I learned later that the ILD was organized in 74 countries. I hadn't realized that it was a world wide organization. Let's see. There was a great woman socialist, a communist leader, who was - Clara Zeitkin - she was one of the leaders of the International Labor Defense.

Ken: OK. What about the general strike. Did you play any part in that at all?

Orr: We mentioned that we were having street meetings of the communist party in downtown Richmond. And we spoke on behalf of the longshoremen and their demands. Of course we had been helping to get out this shop paper which was distributed at the gates of the Standard Oil company refinery, and so we may have taken up a collection from people wanting to help that way. Of course we had helped and were helping to circulate and get money for the Western Worker which supported the longshoremen and gave them a means of getting printed material out to their members. But the main thing as far as we were concerned personally was that during the strike (maybe kind of toward the end) the workers came to us one morning and said that the Standard Oil and the Pg&E, I think, were getting vigilantes together, and it was very likely that they would come to our house sometime during that day.

Ken: We have that whole story.

Orr: So I think this was the main way aside from supporting it by letting people know about it, to raise some

Orr: money, and the role of the Western Worker which we have discussed.

Ken: Let's go back now because Paul is free. We were talking about your work in the church. There were just a couple of question I wanted to ask about that and that was, when Paul was fired from his job at Cal Tech, did that change, and the church leaders turned against you, how did you feel about that, did it change your attitude toward the church at all.

Orr: I understand you want to have Paul respond to this.

Ken: No, you wanted to have Paul respond to this. You thought he could respond better than you. Or was that it?

Orr: Well I think we should get his response to this and if anything comes up that I want to add, I will.

Ken: OK.

Paul: Well, naturally we were, well, very sorry for this situation as it developed. We felt that we had been working for the best interests. In our class that we had organized were programs of interest that brought them more into, oh the stream of events. They actually said that we were the best presidents that they had had. And yet after this, my being called before the Un-American ActivitiesCommittee and the exposure through the media, they expunged the record and erased the fact that we had ever been presidents of the Parents Class. And of course we were disappointed in Dr. K. Morgan Edwards taking the stand that he did because we had had quite a lot of respect for his ability and his general stand. Well, we were, as I say, very disappointed. It was really a serious situation for us. Out of a job and verr little money, and with the ostracism and the press. I don't think. I really thought the church had a possible role, but it certainly wasn't playing a role that it could. There w ere individuals in the

Paul: Methodist Church, the Methodist Federation of Social Action, that I supported and still feel very sympathetic towards. But I guess it did influence my thinking about the whole organization of the church as such. I haven't been interested in it specially, in participating since then.

Orr: I would like to add one thing. I think that Paul felt that the action on the part of the Parents Class showed that they didn't understand very much about what he thought was the way in which he felt that Jesus reacted to certain situations. He felt that they really were not taking his life as an example in trying to live according to his principles. And I think this cut rather deeply with ~~him.~~ Paul

Ken: Although the church as a body and the Parents Club as a body did not want to support you, threw you to the wolves so to speak, how did the individual people in the church react toward you?

Orr: Well, there was one couple in the Parents Class who went to the minister who had worked with our class and tried to get something arranged. I mean something so that we could come back. And he said that he was sorry, that the Parents Class had only a very slight relationship with the church as a whole; that it was more a social group. Most of the people belonged to the church, but it was not a regular body of the church. And that he thought the feeling was so high in the Parents Class at that time (which you must remember was 1955 in the middle of the McCarthy period and the hysteria) and that there wasn't any use in doing it. There was one man who came who was very close to the American Friends Service Committee in their peace work, and we had worked with him. And he came to us (he was a teacher) for a very serious discussion as to whether he should give up his teaching job rather than go on subscribing to the loyalty oath because Paul had said he would not be a party, you

Orr: know, to starting it at Cal Tech. Well, he had a family. And all the public schools had that loyalty oath. So we did not encourage him to give up his job or whatever. And all the rest of the time we were in Pasadena he kept up a personal relationship with us. But he was really the only one. He was on the Methodist Friendship and Peace committee with us, and there was another man who was on it. The other man had nothing to do with us for several years and then he looked us up. We had some discussions and he invited us out to lunch, and so on. So that - You remember that I mentioned before that the people - one of the reasons for their strong reaction was that somehow their own senses or judgment had betrayed them because they thought that we were fine people, and now because of the hysteria it seemed to them that we were very terrible people, and how could it have been that they were so wrong in their judgment. We didn't pick up any of them. I may be wrong, but it think this is one reason for their strong reaction.

Ken: I see. That just about covers that, I think. Let's go into party life and policies. That's another sub title I've got here. In the very beginning, and I certainly should have asked you this question and don't know why I missed it, when you had some reservations about joining the party and Paul waited for you, what were your reservations?

Orr: I wasn't going to have anybody tell me what to do. That was very simple, and the reason I changed was because I felt that socialism was very important and we had really comitted our lives to helping people to understand what socialism could do for the people in our country, and so I really put up in the first - well let's see how many years of our party life - well the first ten to fourteen years of our party life I put up, we put up with a terrible lot of bureaucracy on the part of some of the leadership. I mean they really undertook to order you around.

Orr: And some of the bureaucrats have left the party and are not now in it. And one thing we put up with was a terrible lot of cigarette smoke. And we finally decided we didn't have to eat that much cigarette smoke for the sake of working for socialism. But the bureaucracy we also came to understand, and this is one of the hardest things for me to understand - that you don't just fight capitalism on the outside of the party, but that every member of the party drags capitalism into the party organization with them. And you have to struggle against the capitalist ideas, the capitalist undemocratic methods of work; all of these things by which you are surrounded. You are in a sea of this all of your life and you bring this into the organization, and you have to find a way to work and still struggle against that so that you can work against capitalism. Well, eventually I came to(I, and I think we) see how this was, and we are still struggling. And when we are through with the capitalist remnants in the party we will have gotten to such a high stage that we won't need the party either altogether. So, I think that's about it.

Now we didn't do everything that they said or indicated we ought to do. I mean the district organizer, after Darcy, wanted us to go up to Sacramento and be the party organizers up there. And we said, "no". We thought there was a party group up there and they should rather choose somebody who knew the community and so on. And he never forgave us for that. And I think I've mentioned a few other incidents too where we resisted. I mentioned this in connection with Louise running for the state committee. We didn't accept everything, and one minor thing - somebody said to us, "Well, what are you doing tonight?" And we said, "If you want to know what we are doing tonight, we will be at home on the sofa holding hands, and we are<u>not</u> going to any meeting." And then some of the other people, particularly when we were a couple of years down in Los Angeles, Paul was working with the

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Orr: I.W.O.*, they felt that we ought to grab a quick bite downtown so that we could get to a meeting quicker. We said, "No, we are going to eat our dinner at home. We don't have money enough to eat downtown and we don't think the food amounts to much either, and we are going to go home, and we are going to get our dinner." So we didn't accept everything, you know.

Ken: Did you ever refuse to do anything where you were called to task for not having done it?

Orr: Right now I don't remember, but I do remember that in the period just after the first revelations about Stalin that Paul was called in by the Department of Immigration and they wanted him to testify against one of the leading comrades. And they came to see him first on his job at Cal Tech. Before they identified themselves they asked him certain questions, and he talked with them a little bit. And then they identified themselves. And he didn't say anything. And he got a lawyer. And he went with the lawyer, and at the hearing he didn't answer any of their questions. But some of the people who thought they were super communists who were on the section committee (and this was after we were living in the Pasadena area the second time that we were down South in Southern California) they decided that because he had talked to these men from the Bureau of Immigration when they came to Cal Tech and he didn't know who they were that he was no longer fit to be in the party. And they were about to take up proceedings to put him out. These same people in a few years got out themselves after the Stalin revelations. Well I used all the personal influence I had with the organizer of the branch we were in and did all kinds of things to help her personally and otherwise so that she would take a position that he should not go out. Then later I got kind of mad, and I said, "Oh, to heck with it". I said, "Let them put us out if that's the way they feel about it.

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*International Workers Order

Orr: We'll still go on doing most of the same things." Well, I didn't really feel that altogether, but if I had any personal charm whatever I used it so as to prevent these things. And Paul kind of withdrew into himself. Right then he wasn't ready to fight. Well, you know, they were small bureaucrats. But I don't remember our ever being disciplined. I think that people have sometimes taken exception to - well you know - made some formulation or one thing and another. But finally I got pretty independent and I thought well I'm not going to worry about what they think or what they try to do. But I would always, if I bad been called up for something, put up a principled fight.

Ken: It's interesting to see how this came about - democratic centralism?

Orr: Well, you see it's very hard to really understand democratic centralism. But the central question is the strength of the ruling class. And all that the workingclass and its allies, and we are only allies, all that they have is their unity, their solidarity, and their actions together. And if we didn't have as strong a ruling class you wouldn't have to have an organization that had this - and with democratic centralism it's just like the other things I talked about, once we've gotten so that we understand it we'll be to the place where we don't need it any more. So it's part of the struggle, and it's the hardest part of the struggle to understand.

Ken:= Here's another question. You joined in the time of the depression when things were really tough for radicals. Did either of you ever feel you were giving up anything for your party commitment - giving up a way of life you should have had, or anything like that?

Orr: I think we didn't regret it. But the point was, it was very hard for me to speak on a street corner. Well, my family, my education, everything, you didn't do that kind of a thing. But we felt, and we still do, that we aren't really sacrificing, but that what we want in life can only be had when there is

Orr: socialism. Although we have been more fortunate than most people in our country. Even people who are much, much richer (I mean who are rich, and we aren't). We have had many more opportunities, and we have made many more friends. Let me give you one instance. One of the people who belongs to the small hiking club to which we belong, we said somethigg about, well we are going to send our annual letter out to five hundred of our friends. And he said, "Five hundred! I don't know five hundred people." Here we were with friends who were glad to get the letter. And so we have far more friends than almost anybody has, and they are friends on the basis of principle. Some of them have been in the party and have left, but they still respect us because we stayed, and they are glad to welcome us to their homes and you know we have a relationship together, we discuss things. They take one point of view on some things and on the other hand they let us know about some things they have heard which they think are important which we should read or something else -

Paul: We have friends, like one in one of the big telephone companies. He is very much interested. We have people in Desert Hot Springs who are active in conservative circles and they are pretty good friends of ours. They thank us at Christmas - they are glad to see us.

Second side of tape

Orr: I think it should be noted that we have far more friends who are not in the communist party than who are. And we have a number of friends whom people would probably consider were anti communist and anti Soviet. So most of our friends have known that we belong to the communist party. There was a period during the McCarthy period where some of them were left to guess whether we were, but we always defended the right of communists. We always defended what we considered was the correct position if the Soviet Union took it. Now we don't think it was correct that the Soviet Union walked out of the United

Orr: Nations Security Council, I think it was, at the time of the Korean war because it gave it a chance for the United States to make it appear like a United Nations action. But we have never, well, just accepted it if people were saying things against the party or saying things against the Soviet Union - we brought up facts on the matter.

Ken: Do you consider yourself a professional revolutionary?

Orr: This is a matter of what you consider a professional revolutionary.

Ken: What do you consider a professional revolutionary?

Orr: In general I think the matter of a professional revolutionary would probably be someone who was a full time functionary of the party, or maybe occasionally in some other organization, and they got whatever means they had of living from the contributions that the people made to the party or to some other workingclass organization. Earlier there was a period of years when we did get whatever we had to live on that way. Sometimes, like in the early thirties, over in Richmond, it was four or five dollars a week which we managed to stretch over food and utilities. And the landlord let us stay without our paying rent. From 1946 on we have made whatever we had for a living by working for the capitalist system in some way or another. Then there might be another definition of professional revolutionaries although I think this would be the main one. It would be if you really decided to devote all of your energies ~~and so forther~~ to helping people understand about socialism and bringing it about in this country. And I think that we have given more of our time, thought, and energy to this than many people who belong to the communist party. Some of the people who belong to the communist party, like some other people in the workingclass movement, never got a real vision of socialism. They saw the need for union activity. they saw the need for action against racism, but they didn't get ahold of the fact that only socialism would give you a foundation on which to ~~reach it~~ complete these things. But I

Orr: think you also have to take into consideration we did not have any children. And if we had had children we could not have given as much time and effort to it because a part of it would naturally have to go to help them develop, and maybe having to get a more lucrative job so as to support the family. So we are in a different position than many. But I think we spend more of our time, thought and energy than you have to in order to be a member of the party, and more than many party members do. But we have had somewhat exceptional circumstances.

Ken: Speaking of children, one questin I wanted to ask - during the war when the party had this all out effort to win the war - no holds barred, and everything - how did you go about getting a leave of absence to go up to the mountains for three months. Was it difficult?

Orr: We went to see Rudie Lambert, whom I guess was the organizational secretary at that time, and first we said, well you know Paul had pneumonia in the shipyards, and we feel that we would like to have three months off and go up to Yosemite. I think the doctors had felt that he needed to have this. And he (Rudie) said you know we are all working pretty hard to win the war and I guess you ought to think it over some. And I said, "Well, there is one other reason, and that is we would like to have a family. We have been trying and we haven't succeeded. It seems though there might be a possibility if we went there, and then there seems to be a possibility that when you go horseback riding that sometimes it stimulates the glands as far as a woman is concerned, and we hope that something like this might (and we have been working for about five years with the doctor)." and he said, "Well if it's a matter that you want to have a family I think you should have a leave of absence." Now what Rudie really said was that "I'll take it up with our committee, but it seems to me that because this is something that you have been working on ~~and so on~~ that ~~xxx~~ this should be taken into consideration, and for myself I would

Orr: be for it. Because he didn't decide it by himself.

Ken: Let's get on to other things here. I want to go quickly through some of the changes in party policy that took place (the drastic ones) and see what your reactions were. The first - well the Seventh World Congress, youhave talked about that. That was a key thing. The second key thing was the Soviet-Nazi non-aggression pact. What was your first reaction to that?

Paul: It was surprise.

Violet: Well, I think Paul is right. I think we were surprised but we have always taken the position with something that the Soviet Union does - first that we had no responsibility for it. I mean they were doing it. And because we were communists we were not responsible for what they did. They made mistakes - probably a lot less mistakes than we would, but it was not on our heads that they made mistakes. But the main position we took was let's give it a little time and see what develops and see if we understand some things we don't understand. Plus the fact that we emphasized that they were surrounded by a capitalist world and that they were under continuous attack in every way except overt military attack part of the time. And we didn't know whether this was important to try to get time - to buy a little time. So I think this gives our general attitude toward it. I mean. And you couldn't necessarily explain to everybody about it, but you as you didn't know absolutely yourself. But I think the matter that we understood the need for socialism, and we understood not altogether something of the strength of the ruling class of our country, of its role as an imperialist power in the world and so on, we knew that there would be things. And you see all of these questions were particularly hard for intellectuals. We were intellectuals. But not intellectuals in the same way as other people who

Orr: wanted the Soviet Union to follow their blueprint for what it should do, and they felt that it was a blueprint for socialism. And so they would get angry because the Soviet Union didn't do it their way. And we didn't have a way. I mean we were undertaking to understand Marxism. But we didn't feel that we understood just what the Soviet Union ought to do in every circumstance. So it didn't upset us as much as some of the other people who were really more concerned with their own ideas than either the Soviet Union or socialism I think, sometimes. I am not wanting to run all the people down.

Ken: I think I'll paraphrase something. Did you consider then that what is good for Communist Russia is good for the whole world?

Orr: Well - I don't think - all right you explain.

Ken: What I mean is the whole thinking about your being in the party at that time was that if Russia was doing something, it was right. If you didn't understand it, or didn't agree with it necessarily, it was because you didn't understand it?

Orr: No. We did not accept that everything that the Soviet Union did was right, and there were some things that right on the face of it (and one of the main things was this matter of withdrawing from the Security Council) I think quite soon that we could see that that was wrong, and we never undertook to explain it, or whatever, And this much we were convinced of, and that is that the Soviet Union was the first country to undertake to establish socialism and that it was very important for the world that they should go ahead, and that we would learn from their mistakes as well as from their successes. The other socialist countries - since that time they have had a chance to have a "behind look" at some things. But we didn't necessarily feel that evetything that the Soviet Union did was right, and therefore that everything they did was to the advantage, and when you say the whole world you've got to make a distinction between the imperialist world and the

We were & are convinced that in struggling against U.S. imperialism the Soviet Union helped us & all working people in the world

Orr: workingclass world.

Ken: What about "The Yanks are Not Coming" campaign. Were you involved in that in any way?

Xxxx It was a pretty big campaign, but was it a part of the party policy at that time?

Orr: Well, I must say I remember the slogan and I feel that it must have been during the phase of the war that we thought was particularly imperialist, but I can't remember specific things about it.

Ken: Let's go on to the next big shock, and that's when the Soviet Union was attacked. Suddenly the party policy changed. What was your reaction to that?

Orr: Well, I think we were convinced that the character of the war had changed. I think that in one of the other interviews we discussed the matter of the "premature anti fascists". These would be the ones who understood the need for going to Spain to help defend the republic; and they sensed the growing imperialist character of the attack on Spain which became, I think, an attack on Poland, and then became an attack on the Soviet Union. And of course if wex felt that it was important for the Soviet Union to go ahead and demonstrate for the rest of us what they could about what socialism would be then to have the Nazis and the minor Italian fascists attack the Soviet Union we felt already that the defense of the Soviet Union was a defense against fascism, and I think that we recognized that they had almost overrun Britain, not quite. But that if they were able to defeat the Soviet Union that probably the Nazis would rule the world for a period of time. And so it was a defense of the first country to be working on Socialism, but it was also a defense of our country and the rest of the world against the fascist brutality, destruction of culture, and well there was already the attack on the Jewish people and the sending not only Jewish people but trade unionists, communists, socialists and others to the concentration camps so that to us it was no longer

Orr: essentially an imperialist war, but it was a war really first of all of the workingclass of the world to defend their bourgeous democracy and the Soviet Union, and secondly of all people to defend what they had in the way of a standard of living.

Ken: Right after the war, we discussed a little bit this internment of the Japanese, the party didn't have a policy on it. Did you think there should have been a party policy on it?

Orr; I think I made this fairly clear ~~in the other~~ earlier. The party did have a policy, unfortunately. The policy did accept it was necessary to help win the war and did not bring up the matter that the Germans were not interned and many (not many, let's say a section of the German born or extraction in this country had belonged to different organizations, fascist organizations in this country) and so ~~the~~ - as I said before - I think the policy was wrong, but I think that we had an uneasy feeling inside of us, but we didn't do anything specifically like trying to bring up a discussion or trying to challenge the policy of the party. And I brought it up in the other interviews that I think that altogether our party, and we as a part of it, did not recognize that while the central character of the war was anti fascist there were all kinds of imperialist tendencies interwoven into it, and because we let ourselves or were letting ourselves be taken down the slope of revisionism and not reacting to things and analyzing them as Marxists we were fuzzy, much worse than fuzzy, I mean we were wrong on this. And I don't think that we ourselves, you know, took an active part to try to change the policy.

Ken: Here's another thing along the same lines. During the war you mentioned the Communist party didn't press enough for better conditions for workers and the minority people because the major thing was the war effort. How did you feel about this policy at the time?

Orr: I don't want to seem to throw everything on to revisionism/ I think the matter that we were not using our science of Marxism to analyze these things and we were not differentiating the working class from the rest of the people of the country as having a particular role to play for the benefit of all people who work. I think this was that, well, we kind of went whole hog for the matter of this was an anti-fascist war and you did everything to win the war. And we were not discriminating as to which things were necessary to win the war and to which other things were also important. Maybe indirectly they helped to win the war. And we were too simplistic about the whole thing.

Ken: What about the second front. Did you participate in any way in that activity?

Orr: Well we felt very keenly that a second front needed to be opened because we could understand that the main weight of the Nazi war machine was being borne by the people and the army of the Soviet Union, and that to crush the Nazi war machine meant that we had to enter into drawing off part of them. It seemed to me that we would never get to doing it. But we helped to distribute leaflets, pamphlets, thePeople's World. We spoke at any organizations where we could speak. We talked with people. And of course this was one of the very strong imperialist aspects of the war. This was the place where the members of the ruling class were very class conscious. They hoped, and they not only hoped, they supported with money and other things the Nazi war machine, and they really I think believed that it would crush the Soviet Union. They didn't know the inner strength of the people and of their socialist organization. And even though Stalin was already partly crazy I think, still there was the matter of the whole development of the socialist system that

Orr: gave the people a tremendous strength. Then I think that Stalin contributed to the winning of the war. I think he made a real organizational contribution. So we felt that the opening of the second front was - well of course we ourselves couldn't know ~~but~~ how well the Soviet Union could mobilize themselves and do - I don't say we ever lost hope and felt that they could be overcome. I think we didn't. But on the other hand we knew it could happen. They could be overcome. And presumably we were allies and we were concerned with crushing the Nazi War machine, and our leaders were not.working on it. So it was a very great concern to us. It was one of our greatest concerns during the war.

Ken: You mentioned that you were an intellectual, and it didn't occur to me. I don't catagorize people too much. Were you treated any differently in the party because you were considered an intellectual?

Orr: Well, I don't remember any specific instance or any particular time. I think that we under took to be well - for an example consider the professional section. We never belonged to the professional section. But for example it was thought that people, you know, considered themselves writers amongst communists, abd we figured they ought to be communists amongst other writers. And so I think that with us we felt that we were not members of the working class by our background, by what we were doing, but that we were intellectuals who had allied ourselves with the workingclass believing that their participation and development was necessary to win the socialism which we wanted.

Ken: Is that why you and Paul went into industry instead of professional jobs when you went to look for work between your full time work in the party?

Orr: I specifically went into industry because I felt I wanted to have the experience of women who were working in industry so that I could understand it better. And as far as I know Paul didn't go into industry in just that way. He really looked for

Orr: what job could be gotten. Of course when it came to the shipyards he did go into the shipyards to help win the war. He didn't go in to find out how people worked in the shipyards. Or he didn't go in for the wages. And I guess most of our extra wages went into war bonds. Fortunately there was rent control, there was price control and so our living costs - and gasoline was rationed so you couldn't use thet much - and we still have the five cent carfare in San Francisco - so really our living costs didn't rise, and we didn't have shortages like people in Europe and other parts of the world we didn't have any real shortages with which to contend and didn't have to buy anything on a black market in order to live -

Ken: Getting back to the laundry workers - there was one time when you felt it was better for the women to have an hour lunch instead of a half hour which they wanted. Did you feel it was better for them and they didn't know that it was better for them. I mean instead of going to the women and finding out what do you want, what are your needs. Was this a matter of teaching them what is better for you and you lost that little campaign because it wasn't what they wanted?

Orr: As I understand it, this was some of the distilled experience of the working class. And that was that if you had the hour's lunch that you still had some energy left at the end of the day to do something for yourself. And that if you rushed through it in half an hour and didn't have that extra time to rest that you were through half an hour earlier but you were an hour or two more tired. So what we were trying to do was to educationally help share with the women the experience of the working class which we felt was much more decisive than to just go and say, well how does it seem to you under these circumstances. Now I think there are plenty of times when one should go and find out what the people want

Orr: in specific things, but this was a part of the experience of the workingclass like the eight hour day, you see. And we didn't go to the women and say would you rather work a nine hour day and have an extra buck. They wouldn't have had an extra buck because it was $18.00 for the week, or an extra fifty cents or something like this you see. There were some things that the workingclass had sweat and bled and died for. With those things you don't ask people what they want but try to help them understand that this is distilled experience of the workingclass from which they can profit.

Ken: Thank you. That's excatly what I wanted to know.

End of tape

Corrected 3/20/77
U. Orr

Ken: What was your first reaction to the dropping of the atom bomb?

Orr: I think we didn't understand the full implications. I think that we accepted it at face value as a part of the ending of the war which we were very anxious to have take place. I think we didn't see the imperialist aspect, that it was really shaking an atom club at all the rest of the world, and particularly against the Soviet Union. And I am afraid that we welcomed it as a scientific achievement. I can't remember all about it, and of course we didn't know (it was not presented to us by the media) that the Japanese had several days before asked for the terms of surrender so that it was absolutely unnecessary as far as ending the war. And that the Soviet Union had been asked to clear the Japanese out of Manchuria, but that they did it so fast that the supposed allies got scared on the matter. I had a much stronger reaction to the testing of the first bomb in the Pacific, and if and when you want me to say something about that I will.

Ken: Now is the if and when.

Orr: Well I think we had had a chance to learn a great deal more in the intervening period, and it seemed to me that this was a very serious thing for the whole world, and I know it seemed to me that in the peace movement we should raise the slogan and work for no more testing of bombs. At that time we were working with the peace committee in the Methodist Church in Pasadena and we discussed this some and most of the people on our peace committee didn't see the need too much and they were sure that other people wouldn't see it, and they were very right about that. And so it was really several years later where it really became an issue that was brought up by the whole peace movement. I am not saying this to say that I was so smart, but I mean I had this absolute reaction to it where I didn't have a really similar

ORR: concrete reaction to the dropping of the atom bomb, and I didn't understand then the racial implications that it was dropped on a non white people to end the war and it had not been dropped on the white Nazis. I didn't grasp that.

Ken: Here's another post war question. Right after the war many women went back to their homes from industry, either they were laid off, and the general media policy was that this was a good thing, that women were just working to win the war, now they had succeeded, and now they were going back to their families and their homes - How did you react to this?

Orr: I disagreed with it. I mean I - my experience had been that women were much more satisfied with their lives when they were out taking part in the productive life of the world. And many of them were even able to organize the household work (I don't necessarily say the care of the children - yes even the care of the children) - that they could organize it better having something of interest, and of course having the money, I felt it was a necessary part of the women's lives that they should have this part in the work of the world, and that just being at home stunted them, didn't give them opportunity, and they were held down to all kinds of monotonous little details that shouldn't have had to be done by an individual. They should have been worked out socially in some way. And of course for a long time I had been in agreement with Lenin on the matter of women. And he pointed out that every cook should learn to rule the state. And so I had been particularly interested in the matter of women in the thirties and so on when I worked in the Laundry Workers Union. I mean I worked because I wanted to understand the whole thing more, so I never accepted that in general, and I never accepted it for individuals. I remember a couple of women when we were teaching in Oregon who had taught, and we encouraged them to take a few more courses and be able to teach again, and believed that their whole life would be better and richer for their doing it, and it turned

Orr: out that way in both cases.

Ken: Another post war thing. Did the change in policy as a result of the Duclos letter bother you? How did you adapt to it?

Orr: I think it was a relief to us because we had come to understand enough of Marxism that at least when it was pointed out clearly we could begin to interpret a lot of the things that had been bothering us. And so I think we greatly appreciated that someone in another party was really undertaking to help us. Now you see there had earlier been the Communist International. But it was dissolved in it must have been '39 or '40. And you see I never did understand just exactly why it was. One of the reasons I guess was that there was such a strong campaign against our party as being agents of a foreign government. But I think that it is very important for one party to somehow find a way to express what they think is wrong to another party. And the party to which they express it has to make up their own mind about the matter. So I think we were very glad and -

Ken ; Did you have any reservations prior to that about the Browder policy?

Orr: Well I already told you a little bit about Archie Brown kind of in the beginning when it came out about Teheran just at the beginning of the war when we went in that the people tried to ostrasize him. They didn't try actually to throw him out of the party because he said that Browder's position was wrong on the working class. But we stood up for his right to say that. So I think we got engulfed in winning the war and

Paul: It was so correct when the ~~order~~ letter came through. I think we all grasped that.

Ken: How did this change affect you personally, the change in policy? In 1945 the Duclos letter came out.

Orr: As far as I can remember it had no particular impact on how our lives were organized because we went on doing what we had been doing. Paul was working with

Orr: the literature after he had finished his work in the shipyard, and I was working with the People's World. And actually what changed our lives was what I have already explained to you, that in 1946 we went up to see some friends, and we had really both wanted to teach, and this seemed like an opportunity to teach, so this made a great change in our lives. And actually we continued to struggled from then on and we are still struggling now, to help win socialism.

Ken: Another question about the party policy during this period. Did you feel Wallace had a chance to become president when you campaigned for him?

Orr: I think we thought there was a bare chance, but primarily we campaigned for him because of his stand for peace because you see this had been something that for a large share of our lives we had felt very important for the people of our country and the world. We really felt that if the people of the world had time and weren't killed off they could come to what we believed that socialism was the best form. But we also granted maybe there wouldn't be socialism, but there would be something. But they couldn't come to sonething if they were dead.

Ken: Did you know that the campaign was mainly on the East and West Coast with little or nothing in between? Did you have any idea of the campaign that was going on at the time for him?

Orr: No, you see we were really isolated. We were living in a very small community. I think we did get a report in the paper, but I think we didn't have any overall conception of his campaign. And I think it was part of the habit of our lives ~~which~~ that we did something if that something was considered to be good for the people although we knew that there was some danger as far as our jobs were concerned.

Ken: Oh, about that. You mentioned when Paul lost his job at Cal Tech you didn't get much help from the CP leadership. What do you think was the reasoon for that? What were the reasons for that?

Orr: We were considering this before we came to see you this time, and I had put a note in on it with an asterisk on the note - I think how they could have helped us was to have gone over what we could do to help people understand about it, specifically the need for having a statement to give to the press. We were inexperienced, and we didn't know this. Our A.C.L.U.*lawyer didn't consider it and Paul went to a meeting of all the people who were being called by the UnAmerican Activities Committee that particular trip to L.A.,which was organized by the Anti HUAC Committee, and they didn't bring up the matter of having a statement ready for the press. And you see after he had been pounded on for over two hours it would have given him a chance to have, probably not his whole statement, but excerpts from the statement would have gone out with a story on him, which would have meant that there was some greater understanding on the part of people. It wouldn't have served him any, but it would have gotten some benefit from what happened to him. Now the reason as to why they didn't do it?

Ken: Yes.

Orr: I think it waa a part of revisionism. Dorothy Healy and Ben Dobbs were the leaders, and I think that our movement had gone away from a Marxist analysis and a workingclass reaction to things,and I think that this affected them. And I think that through the revisionism we had in our movement that we had lost for the time being some of the human concern which we had experienced during the 1930's - this very great solidarity and we were really concerned about how people were able to live, how they were to get their food, and I think this was not so much an individual characteristic as it was that we accepted a capitalist point of view and a capitalist point of view doesn't consider people being important. There are different values.

Ken: I see.

Orr: But we certainly did miss the solidarity that had been so strong and such a help in the thirties and the early forties.

Ken: Well, those are all the holes I wanted to fill up, things I had forgotten or didn't think of at the time. How about some general questions now. I want your opinion on the Equal Rights Amendment.

Orr: I think that the name Equal Rights Amendment is a misnomer. I think that probably the middle class women who brought this forward had very good intentions and that theywanted to see women have equal rights with men. But they had never worked and struggled for better conditions of work. They had never worked at night and had a family at home so they stayed up during the daytime to look after the family. So I think they took up the wrong end of things. And that is that if a woman is going to have a chance to work she is going to have to have some help with the housework and with the children. And some of these laws, like that women shouldn't work at night, were a matter of having to safeguard women's health. What I think is that it would be very good to have it equal by having men have these rights too and that if they had worked for the matter of child care with half the energy that they put into this that it would have gone much much farther in getting equal rights for women because women are in an unequal position.~~regardless of society.~~ They are in an unequal position because it takes a certain amount of time to rear a child. It takes a certain amount of physical energy to do this. And if they are going to have an equalopportunity to work they have to have some special conditions on the basis of that we consider it socially useful that they have some children. So I hope that the Equal Rights Amendment will not finally be ratified, and I hope that the elements that are necessary to give women an equal opportunity like the matter of being fired; that they not be fired because they are last, but that the firing be on a percentage basis for example.

Orr: Of course the main thing is to get enough work opportunities for everybody. In this connection I am certainly for the thirty hour week at the forty hour pay.

Ken: In any life situation, has being a woman affected you for better or for worse in any way. You mentioned the Watkins where it was easier for you to be invited into the house, but what other things affected you?

Orr: Well, I think in the party I have helped some of the men understand a little bit the approach to their wives so that their wives could at least understand why they were in the party and that it was not something against the women, but that it was something to make conditions better for them; and that they had to not be so overcome by the organizational work that they neglected their family, time for their family, and so on, and to help them understand that their life was enriched by their family and that the wife's life could be enriched by the organizational work. And to try to work in such a way that she would also want to join. And whether she joined or not that she would feel that it was in her interest.

Now I guess I have to think for a minute as to in what way being a woman has helped in other things.

Ken: What I mean is on a job or in a situation has being a woman made your work easier or more difficult for you to do things.

Orr: My experience in a capitalist world is that being a woman makes it harder for you to do things and that you have to draw back on certain things and see what understanding you can get on the part of other people. And that they expect you to be a secretary in an organization, but they do not expect you to be a president. And I have been a secretary lots of times when I could have been the president. But the other people in the organization (sometimes women as well as men) wouldn't have accepted my doing it nearly so well. So I did at least half of the work of the chairman, being a secretary, and remained being a secretary, and I've gotten a little bit tired of it,

Orr: although I am a secretary now. But I think the only way that it helps you as a woman is that perhaps you have more understanding of relationships between people, and you are more sensitive to it. Partly it may be biological a little bit, but it is primarily the matter that we are forced into paying attention to these things when we don't have the same opportunities. The men can get by without paying attention to some of the personal things, and we can't. Well, I think the personal things are very important if they are not made the whole thing, but only a part of it. So I am glad for the understanding that I have. I am glad for what is sometimes called women's intuition, although often I have tried to disregard it on the basis of some reason and something else. But now I depend a great deal more on my intuition and I find that it works to my benefit and the benefit of the people I'm with. Now if there is something else you would like to ask.

Ken: No, you answered it beautifully. Now here's another general question: Would you do things differently if you had to do them over again?

Orr: Well, of course, in the first place you don't choose your parents or where you are born. But I am proud of my parents. And I feel that my father helped me understand much more about social things, and I mean social in the sense of people working together. He had a great sense of the need for cooperation and that everybody should lift on the load. I feel that with my mother we had a real understanding about health, although my father was interested in food to some extent, but she never had the doctor except when we had an infectious disease and she got us well you know. And then my mother understood the relations between people, and my mother had had much more in the way of cultural advantages than my father, and she helped me to appreciate music for example. So I do not wish that I had had different parents, and I feel that in the period living in Eastern Oregon, I feel it was a great asset to me to be as close to nature as this, and to live without

Orr: the artificiality of civilization. It made it hard for me when I came into city life because things were strange and I wasn't used to relationships between people, and so on. But I am glad I had that. I am certainly glad that I had the opportunity for the education that I had, and I am glad for the opportunities that I had to develop through the church. I give the church a great deal of credit for the time that people give to having wholesome recreation for the young people, and I think this should be done by many more organizations.

Now as to what I would change, well one little thing I would have changed - I didn't come home when my father died. I didn't come home from New York City. And we sent the money it would have cost for me to come home because we thought mother would need the money more. I feel now that it would have helped her more if I had come, and I didn't have anybody to advise me. We were inexperienced. And Paul's mother and father didn't know my parents very well and so they didn't advise us as they would have if we lived in the same community for a period of twenty years or so. So there are some things like that I wish first I had been more developed, and secondly had more- someone who could have raised some questions with me, with us, and we could have decided on them.

One thing I would like to have seen changed. I have lived under fear a good share of my life. And this is very unproductive. And part of the fear was the matter of making a change from the way I had been brought up - in a petty bourgeois way - and I don't know whether it has been brought out, but my family really had very little money by the time we came back to Palo Alto, but I never primarily had a fear of the government. I knew about it. I think that as I brought out before the fear was more a fear of isolation from people, but it - Ihave learned some about the basis for that - partly physical as well as otherwise - and this, I think, kept me from being as productive, as useful, as creative as I could have been with the opportunities

Orr: and the talents I had. Now Paul has always tried to help overcome that. And you know there are certain things I did organizationally that I think maybe could have been done some other way. And I am sure that there have been a few times with my friends that I could have behaved some other way. But I think basically I am satisfied first that I had great opportunities and secondly that I helped make use of those opportunities for what I am sure has been and will be social progress

second side of tape

Well, I said that I think the things I had done had helped some to contribute to progress and well being for the democracy and living conditions for the working people of our country. And as far as the rich are concerned, the corporations and so on, the changes which I think are necessary, I don't ever expect them except for a few to accept. But I am convinced their children will have much more productive and happy lives. Actually the things for which we have worked, and are working, I feel in the long run will be to the physical, spiritual, mental advantage of all of the people who live in our country. I think the history around the world gives some basis in fact for such a theory.

Ken: I think that pretty well covers it. Do you feel free to tell me what the best time, the most satisfying time of your life was, and the most unsatisfying and most unproductive, or can you pinpoint either of them?

Orr; Let's take the most unsatisfying time perhaps, and I think that was right after we lost our teaching jobs and I have explained that earlier. It was satisfying at the time we lost them, the support we got from different people in the community. But we were really very isolated. Nobody from the teachers came to see us although one teacher, a high school teacher, had Paul come and do odd jobs for her. It was really a gesture of solidarity - one that we got the money and secondly that she had something to do with us. But the man who was maintenance, the maintenance man for

Orr: the grade schools and the high schools, he and his whole family came to see us, and they were of Norweigen extraction. And they were the only people who really called on us. And we had been neighbors before we bought the house which we had moved into after our first year of teaching. Then also I was very much concerned with peace since the beginning of the Korean war. And even people who were very active in the workingclass movement would not lift their finger to do one thing about peace. I have never experienced such a time when people would not do anything.

Paul started out in September to sell Watkins goods and to prove that the superintendent was wrong that everybody in town was calling us a communist. But in order to do something about peace there was a man by the name of Harlan Talbert -

Ken: We went into that.

Orr: So in order to do something about peace I was an unpaid secretary for him. And then I think just before I ended that in early November the hardest thing for me was the first day or two I started out with a Watkins case because I had felt some honor as a teacher and I felt that even my students would look down on me. But we were well received and I think our students didn't really look down on us. Not that we had any particular association with them, but in this period I think it was the period of greatest isolation we had ever had in our lives. Do you think so Paul?

Paul: I think so, probably.

Orr: Now, let's come to the time when I felt I was happiest in my work, and I think that was in the period of building the peace exchange because it seemed to me it was very significant work in the first years of the Vietnam War before large sections of ~~the~~ our population had come to understand and enter into the struggle. And the Peace Exchange was a forerunner in the L.A. area. While I don't think that everybody knew that I was a member of the communist party I think they were developed enough to have a pretty good idea I probably

Orr: was. I was the executive secretary and we really helped to raise understanding of what the problems were that we had to meet in reaching out to the people, and we did develop methods of work and different organizations took up methods that were suitable to them. And I really felt that I, and we, were making a contribution. And I had a really good and strong support from the Pasadena Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and freedom. I felt that I had what you might call a base. So I think that, although I was afraid at that time it would be brought up, because you see this was in the early sixties, about my being a Communist and it might prevent my working, and so I went under much more fear and of course the ruling class was responsible for it. But also I reacted to it unnecessarily. So quite a lot of it rested with me. But it was a very happy period because really the organizational work went forward in a way that other peace leaders in the church and the American Friends Service Committee and others ~~who~~ thought that it was not possible to bring all of these organizations together to cooperate. And I suppose this was one example of the united front, that we were for peace and specifically we were for ending the Vietnam war, and that we came together and that we found a way of working without violating the principles and national policies of each organization.

Paul: Didn't you feel too that it was the period when you were secretary of the Board?

Orr: Yes, I thought of that. For about a year, sometime in fifty four to fifty five I was secretary of the Methodist Conference. The national policies for peace were sound in my opinion, and we did have a chance to stimulate work of the committees and individual churches so this was a very good period. I don't think we got as far along organizationally as we could have in the Peace Exchange, but it was a very rewarding period also because naturally if you are concerned about something and if you can see that the educational and organizational

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Orr: Yes. I thought of that. You see for about a year from sometime in fifty four into fifty five I was the office secretary for the Board of Social Study and Action of the Southern California Methodist Conference. And the national policies of the Methodist Board of Peace were very sound in my opinion and would have a chance to stimulate the work of the committees in individual churches so that this was a very good period. I don't think we got as far along organizationally as we did on the Peace Exchange but it was a very rewarding period also because naturally if you are concerned about something and you can see that the educational and organizational work is going forward it gives you the deepest satisfaction.

Ken: Well, that's good. We got some stuff in here that we hadn't had before. You mentioned your Xmas letter. What friendships did you maintain over all your years. Which friends have you had the longest?

Orr: Well, we just celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary this past June and a month before that we had a - we invited Stanford friends to a luncheon, not just for our fiftieth, but as a reunion, and so there were twenty six of us there, and most of us had known each other since about nineteen twenty one or twenty two, which means there was more than fifty years because you see we got married in twenty six, and that would be at least fifty four years we knew each other. One reason we kept a large number of these friendships was one of the other women (and of course we always called ourselves girls) had suggested that we have a round robin of the ones who had graduated in twenty five and a few who had graduated a year or two before, and one or two that had graduated a year or two later, so actually we had had fifty years. I think by that time we had had fifty one years of the round robin which was for around twenty, and I think two of the people had died, ~~a few~~ two had dropped out and we accepted two others I think. But there are

Orr: ~~fourteen or~~ sixteen of us that write, and we get ~~together~~ the R.R. about twice a year. Now at the beginning of the Korean war (I had been pretty careful about politics in the letter) but I said I didn't really see how our country was going to win the war, and one of the women who was teaching (and who had been ~~a~~ our bridesmaid) said that she would have to drop out of the round robin unless they put me out because she couldn't have material like this coming to her house. And so I was out of the round robin from then early in the nineteen fifties, the beginning of the war -

Ken: Did you drop out voluntarily, or did they ask you to leave?

Orr: They put me out, and I don't know whether they conducted a vote without my knowing about it - I don't know just how they worked it. I guess I never enquired. But in 1967 we went to ~~the~~ Expo '67 in Montreal and we stopped to see one of the women (one of the couples from whom we ~~had mentioned~~ had lived in New York City while doing graduate work) and we stopped to see her where she was a Chaplain in an Ohio institution for handicapped children, and stayed two days, and she and I had long talks. Paul had to stay in our van, but I stayed in her room. But she couldn't have a man come and stay in her room. And we had long talks about things, and she said, "Violet, I think I am going to propose that you be taken back into the round robin." This was seventeen years later, and she did propose it, and the woman who had opposed my being in it had died in the meantime, and as far as I know everybody voted for me to come back in. But anyway you see we had these friends. Then one of our other very good friends invited other people with whom we had worked in the party in the ~~forties~~ thirties for an open house, and there were eighteen of us there, and these ~~are~~ were people with whom we had worked to help put forward through the party, ~~the party brought forward~~ the matter of starting unemployment insurance and social security, and these were some of our oldest friends. And I think I don't

Orr: really have old friends from high school nor -

Ken: What about your closest friends?

Orr: I don't know - do you mean how many or what their political position is?

Ken: Who were your closest friends?

Orr: One of my closest friends is Paul.

Ken: What I mean is who were some of your closest friends over the years?

Orr: Well, I think that two of them were the other couple with whom we lived in New York City in twenty six to ~~and~~ twenty eight, ~~Ben and Dorist~~ and we have kept up a very close relationship with them and he has just celebrated his fiftieth anniversary as ~~being~~ a Methodist minister. He has always worked very strongly for peace and he has always been willing to work with different elements in the community, including people whom he knew were communists, in the cause of peace. ~~And I think these are two of our (I am trying to~~). Yes, our friends in the Progressive Book store in Los Angeles [phone rings] -
I think I was saying that one of our very close friends is Clara who is the manager of the progressive bookstore in Los Angeles and whom I first met when I went down to Los Angeles to speak for the Friends of the Soviet Union in the very early part of the thirties. And there was a period when we didn't see ~~or know~~ each other, ~~but when~~ until we were in the Pasadena area and in the desert. Earlier than that when we were in Los Angeles in 1938 and 1940 when Paul worked with the International Workers Order. Well, one of our close friends I think was Oleta O'Connor Yates, and she's gone. And one of our close friends with whom we only keep in touch by correspondence (I think we have seen each other once or so in the meantime) is one of the men with whom we became acquainted ~~with~~ when we were two years in the Soviet Union and went around visiting in the second years institutions and schools, factories, and whatever, together and discussing which

Orr: organization, the church or the party, could help bring the social changes that we thought were necessary. * see page 60. 177

Ken: Can you say a few brief words about the role of women today as - or comparing the role of women today with the role of women in the thirties?

Orr: I think women have made real advances since the thirties in the type of work that is open, and let us say that is open to some women, and when we went to Stanford one woman was in the engineering department, and she was really considered, she must be a great oddity, well, and there were almost no women - one of our friends was taking medicine - but there were almost no women in medicine - and there has been an advance in those fields and in other fields too, and there a woman was not supposed to be able to be married and teach in the thirties. And yet it is now quite accepted as a matter of fact. So there have been advances in work opportunities, work on a professional level and work on an industrial level. There are women doing industrial work now, types of industrial work that they were not doing then. And I think there is a higher consciousness on the matter of both men and women not on the woman problem but on the woman question, ~~and~~ but we have quite a long ways to go because the gap between women's wages for the same type of work, whether it is professional, industry or otherwise, has grown greater in the last few years instead of the gap narrowing. I'll tell you, well I will mention that I am not a feminist. It is one of the reasons why I like the WIL because it is not a feminist organization. Because I feel that men are not the source of our exploitation and our difficulties. I feel that they are often the instruments in carrying it out, but that it comes from. OK I think maybe I said something about men being the instruments of a system. But the other thing I want to say is that I think the Marxist position as examplified in the Soviet Union in legally having equal rights for women, but special conditions

Orr: like maternity leaves and creches and all the rest has - and the fact that there are not half of the women in the parliaments, their councils, their soviets, but in the highest, the Soviet of Nationalities in the Soviet Union, one third are women. And in the lower soviets, that is the soviets in a city or a county scale, in general it is half. And I think that this, the knowledge of this, spreading all over the world has given a tremendous impetus to the struggle for women's rights, and even the feminist movement reflects this in a somewhat distorted form. But nevertheless there are things that they are doing that I think are very worth while and should be supported. I think that's about it. I think we are on our way and I think in our country we still have a way to go.

Ken: Good enough. OK, the last and final question, and then I'll leave you alone for a while, is how did your family react and what was your relationship with your family during this whole period of your being a dommunist, the difficult periods you faced in the thirties and the fifties?

Orr: In the first place I would like to give credit to our families that they always received us gladly into their homes, whether it was our folks or our brothers and sisters, even though they differed with probably most of our conceptions on political matters. I think that there was a realx example of family solidarity and they did help us in different ways, including our in laws. And our in laws had very sharp differences too. And they helped us and they helped us when it came to the matter of family estates that we got our full share and there was never any movement on the part of any of the family to say, well probably the rolkd disapproved of the position you took, and therefore really you don't have- Now this I don't think really is the most important. I think this is only an indication of what they did. They helped us at different times, different ones, and they did help us with some money or some food, though I think we never went to xxxx any and asked them for it. Paul's

Orr: folks particularly helped with food during the thirties. We went down and canned fruit and tomato juice and took the leaves off the alfalfa for the cows ~~for~~ to make tea, and so on. And we have kept a friendly relation with our families though sometimes we have found it necessary to refrain from discussing very much about politics. But we have done it, and I know with my mother I was interested, and she said to me once (this was in the thirties, I think) ~~said said~~, "Well, Violet, you have taught me to be sceptical ~~of~~ in political matters," and she said, "I guess it is very important to do that." Although she was never particularly friendly to the Soviet Union or anything like that, I kept a very close relationship with my mother. Of course my father was killed in twenty ~~six~~ seven. And Paul kept a very close relationship with his father. And with two of my brothers they really became interested in the working class movement and friendly to the Soviet Union, and interested in Socialism. Some of the other members of the family were visited by the FBI, or their neighbors were, and they were harrased. And they took it and went on. This ~~xxxxxxx~~ is what I want to end with. Papa and Mama* came down to see us when Paul was the head of the biology stock room in Cal Tech, and naturally they were very proud. And it was after that — when we had lost our teaching jobs in Oregon and we had been Watkins ~~dealers~~ distributors, and I think they never ~~xxxxxxxx~~ felt that was worthy of the education and opportunities that we had had although they thought the products were good.

So then when Paul was called before the UnAmerican Activities Committee it was a real blow. My mother was already dead. It was a real blow to his parents, and it was hard for them because of what the neighors would think. It was hard for them altogether, the family. I mean, but when we went home to see Papa, Mama Papa said, "Well, Paul, you know every man has to put one stone in the wall."

*Referring to Paul's mother and father.

Orr: That was a great deal of understanding for a man who was a farmer. Maybe because he had been a renter, a tenant farmer,in the first part of his life. But it was - we were very touched that Papa could understand as much as this at the same time that he was feeling sad, ~~and so on.~~

There is one other indication of our relation with our families. Naturally some of the aunts and uncles and cousins on both sides had had a stronger reaction against our ideas and what we were doing, but we have always sent them our annual letter, and we have always put in how we felt on things. We have put it not so strongly as if we had been sending it to all the people who were of the same political pursuasion, but in the twenty years that we have been sending our annual letters two or three of them have written back rather sharply on certain questions and undertaken to, you know, bring up their point of view and maybe change ours, but there are only two who have ever asked to have their names taken off the list for our annual letter, and we think that that's a compliment to our wider family. And we have visited all of them when we got in the area where they lived, and there are none of our relatives who ever were unwilling to let us come and stay overnight with them, or one thing and another like that. And this is a tribute not only to our relatives, but to the American people, that they have a real sense of fair play, and that a person should have some right to their own political and religious beliefs, you know, and should still be considered as citizens and human beings. And many of them sent us congratulations on our fiftieth wedding anniversary.

end

Note: This is ahandwrittenaddition to the tape.

Orr: There are a few more friends of the same 400 to whom we send our annual letter, whom I wish to mention.

In 1955 afew months before Paul was called before the Un American Activities Committee, we were invited to join a small hiking and conservation cooperative club which owned its clubhouse in the Pasadena area, and a small lodge on Mt. San Jacinto. We worked with the Conservation Committee and Paul edited the Newsletter. Some members were anti-communist but we worked together. But three couples respected us for our convictions and work. One couple became managers of the clubhouse; another couple worked hard on activities and the lodge committee. The other couple and we took special Sierra trips together and hiked down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon together on their 25th wedding anniversary.

They did a great deal of the work with our other close friends, and all the members,in hosting a delightful 50th wedding anniversary party for us in June, 1976, with 75 present. We had a fine potluck dinner, music, solo and community singing, two cakes, a few speeches, a wonderful film slide on India, all making a most memorable evening of gaity, warmth and fellowship.

Orr: One of our very good friends is a mother of seven, with a divorced husband evading alimony, who was injured on the job and finally, after seven years, has won her workers compensation from the private insurance company. They expected her to die, and she would have except for her militancy, shrewdness, and perserverance. We helped some. She is almost a daughter.

Another couple have been friends since the early forties in San Francisco, and we try to see them every time we go to the Bay Area. This is true of another couple too, the Nisei wife and I worked together on the People's World.

Still another couple, and we worked together on the People's World committee in Pasadena. They moved to Oregon before us. We see them every few months.

Another couple includes the husband with whom Paul taught in 1946.

We have very good neighbors, whom we met before we came to Oregon in 1974. They do not agree with us on socialism, but encourage us to stand up for our principles.

Last, but not least, our sister (in-law) widow of Violet's brother drowned in 1952. She has encouraged us, entertained us whenwe came to the Bay Area, shown her admiration of our

Orr: principles and work. She insisted on Violet's having this interview - for the California Historical Society - so any contribution it makes is of her doing.

18D Y.O.

ORR -- October 25, 1976

There are two more women about whom I wish to share my reminiscences.

Oleta O'Connor Yates said she first saw me, when she was a student at the University of California. She had come to a meeting in a hall in Oakland, I think a campaign meeting for Wm. Z. Foster in 1932. I was taking the collection and inviting the audience to throw silver dollars, well not exactly at me, but up on the stage. Silver dollars were still circulating in the Bay region then.

One time later she said "You never were sectarian. You and Paul always had a wide circle of friends, not just people in the Party nor around the movement." We appreciated the compliment. But we had been sectarian when we first returned from the Soviet Union, and had made my mother and Paul's folks feel badly unnecessarily, but we worked to change this. They and we felt better.

Oleta was from a well-known Irish family in San Francisco, the O'Connors, whom I believe were politically prominent. Oleta looked frail, but had great physical and moral strength, combined with a great clarity of political thought.

In a few years after she joined she became the chairperson (then still called chairman) of the San Francisco Communist Party. She was modest and retiring, but had a charming smile and was very photogenic. This was not the main reason, but it helped, that she twice got a large vote for County (and City) Supervisor. She was a keen political analyst and a good organizer.

She was near sighted and for years, I understand, could not get a driver's license. Rudie Lambert, who was Louise Todd's second husband, was the organizational secretary for San Francisco. His working class experience and keen judgment of people contributed greatly to Oleta's effectiveness. He often drove the car to take her to meetings. She and Louise were good friends, too. Louise's first husband was a good, working class man, a printer for a long time on our papers. But when he returned from fighting in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, with the Republicans in Spain, he wanted Louise to be home more and not so active in political work, so they separated.

Rudie was the organizer in Oakland, and I was organizational secretary, shortly after Paul and I joined the Party. Once he told me how much he admired Louise. I told her, and I believe it helped to bring them together. For some years he was head of the Party's State Control Commission which heard charges against members. He was fair to the person but considered the good of the organization paramount. He helped to discover a number of stool pigeons. We held him in very high regard, and always tried to see him and Louise when we returned to S.F. in later years.

Oleta, like Louise, always helped me to get my political perspective clear, then I could figure out what to do, usually. But during the war I worked with a very fine Negro community leader in the Fillmore, Jane Gray. We were trying to get housing for Negro (the term Black was not used then) war workers, and we simply got nowhere. And Oleta did not seem to be able to help us with suggestions. In the '30s she and we could always figure out something. I think it was the revisionism which had bit deeply into

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our political thinking and our methods of work.

I think now that we could have gotten the unions, and we had some active members in many of them, and the Negro workers had to join to work in the shipyards, to carry a real campaign with the Mayor and the Supervisors.

This was a about the time that Earl Browder's pamphlet "Teheran" had come out. Browder was the National Secretary of our Party, and already deep in revisionism but we had not recognized it yet.

Jane Gray was a remarkable person, and I was very privileged to work with her and to keep up our friendship until her untimely death, in the '60's I think. In two two-story houses in the Fillmore she ran a home for all men in the armed services, particularly Negros, where they could have a clean bed and food, for a little money if they had it, and for nothing if they did not. They rightly called her "Mother Gray". She wanted them to have home care and be off the street so that they could not be provoked into trouble and thrown into jail. One of these "boys" came back after the war and persuaded her to marry him.

When I learned that the FBI had my work with her in their "dossier" on me I was only ashamed that we had not been able to really get some housing for the Negro men and women war workers.

But Jane Gray and I did one thing together -- on a few weeks notice we brought two thousand people together in ~~the~~ a church in the Fillmore district to hear a wonderful concert by Paul Robeson.

Well -- this is like an interview! I reminisced and digressed.

After we left San Francisco in 1946 Paul and I always came back whenever we could to discuss problems with Oleta. And it was like a breath of fresh air.

During the Smith Act Trials in the '40's, when a number of the State leaders of the Party, and almost the whole editorial staff of the "People's World" was arrested and dragged through a long court trial, which was eventually won through mass support, and the brilliant work of the lawyers, supported by the keen political analysis of the Party Leaders. Rudie made a great contribution here, as elsewhere. The second sentence above was not finished, it was that the judge was greatly irritated by the clear and telling testimony of Oleta -- with no disrespect to the "court" -- and he required a list of names from her before she could be released with the others. So she was kept in jail a longer time. I always thought of the lines from the Irish song "Kevin Barry": "Just before the execution, in his lonely prison cell, British soldiers tortured Barry, just because he would not tell, them the names of his companions -- other things they wished to know. Turn informer and we'll free you, proudly Barry answered 'No!!"

This extra time in jail, with little comfort and poor food, aggravated a condition in one of her shoulders, which her doctor brother-in-law diagnosed as bursitis, and treated, after she was released, with cortisone shots.

Sometime after her release she left our Party, at the same time that Louise did, both saying that they thought we should build more on the basis of American traditions and history. This was a great sorrow to me. Rudie did not leave, but went to work in a liquor shop in order to become a member of the Reatail Clerk's Union. I feel that it was very hard on him that both Louise and Oleta, to whom he had given much moral and physical support in their work, should have given up their participation in the Party. Rudie did more than half of the housework at home -- maybe I should say half -- ~~at home~~ in their attractive apartment.

After a little rest Oleta took a course as a medical secretary, as did Louise, and went to work in her brother-in-law's office. She developed a hobby as a bonzai gardener. Neither she, nor Louise worked against the Party as far as I know.

After a few years Oleta started to get a cold so her brother-in-law sent her to the hospital. But the long continuing cortisone shots had robbed the adrenal glands of their ability to react to even this mild infection and she died in just a day or two. As I remember this is what Louise wrote to me about her death.

Later, maybe one or two years, on the anniversary of her death I sent a letter to the "People's World" remembering her contributions, regretting that she left the party, and noting that her death came from the long continued cortisone shots. The editor, Al Richmond, who later left the Party, and I think worked against it, left out the part about her death and cortisone "because we must not antagonize the doctors".

I have said nothing about Al Yates, Oleta's husband for many years, and a prominent trade union member. After her death he gave an interview to one of the S.F. papers, the "Examiner" I think, which seemed to have anti-Party overtones. He was very able, but after the Smith Act Trials (I think it was) he was blacklisted and had to take work as a night elevator operator, so that they had very little chance to be together.

Now a few of my own reminiscences about Anita Whitney -- I consulted Al Richmond's good biography of her "Native Daughter" -- the Story of Anita Whitney", copyrighted in 1942 by him, and published by the Anita Whitney 75th Anniversary Committee, 170 Golden Gate Ave., S.F. Well, I consulted it only to find the date of her arrest -- 1920 -- on charges of violating the Criminal Sydicalism Act.

Her arrest and trials aroused great mass support and contributed greatly to the final ending of the law.

Anita brought a real gift to the working class -- great political insight, experience in working with people, a wide knowledge of the State of California, and the prestige of her family and her own distinguished record in social service work. And she gained greatly by her association with the revolutionary working class which she found was the only one that could lead in destroying the foundation which continually recreated the evils she worked against, and could build

a socialist foundation which could develop new working relationships based on cooperation and respect for the dignity of all people.

This is my interpretation of her views from hearing her speak a number of times.

Anita was modest, warm and gracious but with prihcipled reactions with the strength of steel. She was able to do what she found to be the right for her and her relationships with other people.

In the later '30's and early forties (as I remember) she was the State Chairman of the Communist Party of California, not as a figurehead but as a worker on committees and in chairing the State Committee. In the time of revisionism in the later '40's she was displaced and District Organizer, William Schneiderman became State Chairman. I think this was not good for the Party, and I feel that Anita did not think so, either. But her loyalty was strong and she went on working on committees.

When she ran for state-wide office she got the largest vote so far registered for a Pary candidate, I think.

She had a fine relationship with her relatives and her neighbors near the little house on Knob Hill where she made her cultured home. Her nephew cared for her when she got arthritis in her knees, and some friends continued to visit her after she moved out to his home near the ocean. My interviewer was one of these.

Violet Orr

Violet Orr

Additional Note:

Jane Gray may have joined the party. If so, it was shortly before we left San Francisco, and she may not have become part of a club. But she understood and appreciated our program for freedom for her people, for women, and for all working people.

Once I asked Rudie how one could check up on someone that I distrusted without becoming factional -- that is talking about someone and so disrupting organizational work. He said that each time after one had been with a person to write down what he or she said and did -- as factually as possible. At the end one could record their own feelings if they wished, but not to mix it in with the facts.

Rudie said that in two or three months a pattern would emerge that confirmed one's suspicions or refuted them. If confirmation, then one could discuss them with an organizer, but not to talk around about it. Once this really worked out. In L.A. in 1939-40 a man was in charge of the "P.W." office and working with the District Managers (volunteers who called on subscribers to get renewals). It seemed to me that he did not work right. He took up the details of the work in a mechanical way without any political discussion or enthusiasm. His superior thought I was wrong, but in a couple of months the man left with about $1500.

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